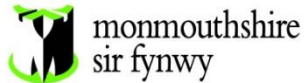


Public Document Pack



Neuadd y Sir
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA

County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Tuesday, 17 June 2025

Dear Councillor

CABINET

You are requested to attend a **Cabinet** meeting to be held at **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** on **Wednesday, 25th June, 2025**, at **4.30 pm**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 3rd June 2025 1 - 4
4. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 10th June 2025 5 - 6
5. Report of the Place Scrutiny Committee: CALL-IN RELATING TO THE LETTING OF THE FORMER ABERGAVENNY LIBRARY 7 - 22

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To provide Cabinet the opportunity to re-consider the decision taken by Cabinet on 21st May 2025 concerning the 'Letting of the Former Abergavenny Library'. This follows the call-in of the decision and the subsequent recommendation of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 11th June 2025 to refer the matter to the Cabinet for re-consideration.

Author: Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager

Contact Details: hazelilett@monmouthshire.gov.uk

6. Strategic Risk Assessment 23 - 50

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.

Authors: Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
Hannah Carter, Performance Analyst

Contact Details: richardjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk
hannahcarter@monmouthshire.gov.uk

7. Nature Recovery

51 - 332

Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: . To seek Cabinet approval of the:

- Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy,

- Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2 (and executive summary),

which together set out the Council's statutory duties, responsibilities, and associated actions for delivery.

Author: Kate Stinchcombe, Nature Recovery and Land Use Manager

Contact Details: KateStinchcombe@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p>Leader Lead Officers – Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse, Peter Davies, Will Mclean</p> <p>Whole Authority Strategy and Direction Whole authority performance review and evaluation, including DDAT Relationships with Welsh Government, UK Government and local government associations Regional Relationships including CJsCs. PSBs and cross boarder Emergency Planning</p>	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader Lead Officers – Will McLean, Craig O'Connor</p> <p>Economic Strategy Skills and Employment Replacement Local Development Plan Placemaking and the development of market and affordable housing Placemaking and Transforming Towns Car parking and civil parking enforcement Development Management Building Control</p>	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Ben Callard	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources Lead Officers – Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse</p> <p>Finance including MTFP and annual budget cycle Revenue and Benefits Human resources, payroll, health and safety Land and buildings Property maintenance and management Strategic procurement</p>	Llanfoist & Govilon
Martyn Groucutt	<p>Cabinet Member for Education Lead Officers – Will McLean, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs/inclusion Post 16 and adult education School standards and improvement</p>	Lansdown

	<p>Community learning Sustainable communities for learning Programme Youth service School transport</p>	
Ian Chandler	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children’s services Fostering & adoption Youth Offending service Adult services Whole authority safeguarding (children and adults) Disabilities Mental health Wellbeing Relationships with health providers and access to health provision</p>	Llantilio Crossenny
Catrin Maby	<p>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment Lead Officers – Debra Hill-Howells, Craig O’Connor, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Decarbonisation Transport Planning Highways and MCC Fleet Waste management, street care, litter, public spaces and parks Pavements and Back lanes Flood Alleviation Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and River health</p>	Drybridge
Angela Sandles	<p>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement Lead Officers – Matthew Gatehouse, Ian Saunders, Jane Rogers, James Williams</p> <p>Community development, inequality and poverty (health, income, nutrition, disadvantage, discrimination, isolation and cost of living crisis) Citizen engagement and democracy promotion including working with voluntary organisations Citizen experience - community hubs, contact centre, and customer service and registrars, communications, public relations and marketing Leisure centres, play and sport Public conveniences Electoral Services and constitution review Ethics and standards Welsh Language Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Public Protection, and Licencing</p>	Magor East with Undy

Sara Burch	<p>Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism</p> <p>Lead Officers – Craig O'Connor, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Local Food production and consumption, including agroforestry and local horticulture</p> <p>Homelessness, Temporary accommodation, private sector housing, (empty homes leasing schemes, home improvement loans, disabled facilities grants and adaptive technology),</p> <p>Allocation of social housing</p> <p>Broadband connectivity</p> <p>Active Travel</p> <p>Countryside Access and Rights of Way</p> <p>Tourism Development and Cultural Services</p>	Cantref
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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

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Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 3rd June 2025

Report Item 5: Additional Learning Provision / Specialist Resource Bases

Members sought clarity on the role and funding of the ALP and partnership lead, the evidence supporting report statements, and the number of children in SRBs (currently 194 out of 229 spaces). They requested access to supporting documents, which may be shared externally. Questions were raised about the £2.3 million annual spend on out-of-county placements, the quality and consistency of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), and the funding models for SRBs, which are under review. Members asked for the number of pupils in out-of-county provision (currently 55), and raised concerns about the use of acronyms and potentially stigmatising language, which the team is addressing. Clarification was sought on placements in England and Monmouthshire's role in hosting pupils from other counties. The impact of travel on well-being, capturing learner and family experiences, and compliance with the ALN Act were also discussed. Members asked about efforts to reduce out-of-county costs through local investment, progress on previous recommendations, and how budget pressures on ALN staff are being mitigated. The Council's response to increasing social, emotional, and neurodevelopmental needs was explored, including the use of the Autism in Schools programme. Criteria for SRB placements were clarified – typically requiring a statutory plan and panel decision. Members also asked whether the model reduces the need for appeals (currently none are ongoing), and whether Monmouthshire plans to develop its own specialist provision. The Council considers its SRB network as its special school model, aiming to keep children within their communities.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions, and wished to extend the committee's appreciation for the team's valuable work.

Report Item 6: Supporting Vulnerable Learners

Members asked for more detailed qualitative and quantitative data on the 68 to 70 placements that have been sustained through support, and the team confirmed it is working to enhance reporting in this area. Concerns were raised about schools' capacity to implement changes due to staffing pressures, the need to align with new emotional well-being frameworks, and the over-reliance on short-term grant funding. In response, the team highlighted its ongoing support through professional

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

development and its efforts to build a sustainable in-house training model. Members also enquired about specific support for children looked after, and it was confirmed that these children are prioritised across services, supported by a dedicated officer and access to specialist teams. Finally, questions about educational psychology provision were addressed: despite a national shortage, Monmouthshire has a full team, supports trainee placements, and offers a range of preventative and consultative services to schools, including link psychologists and flexible access options.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions, and reiterated the committee's appreciation for the team's work.

Report Item 7: Risk Register Update

Members asked for more detail on how risks are categorised by impact and likelihood (e.g. major, moderate, likely, unlikely), which is guided by the Council's strategic risk management policy – this can be shared for clarity. Questions were raised about how consistency is ensured across assessments, which are developed through service business plans and reviewed by the senior leadership team. Members enquired about the use of a risk matrix for specific risks like adult social care provider failure, which are tracked through the risk radar and can be escalated to the strategic register if necessary. There were calls for more detail in the forward work plan to better understand resident impact and scrutiny priorities, and a request to include risk criteria summaries in reports for public accessibility. Concerns were raised about the level of detail on mitigation actions; while the strategic register includes key mitigations, more specific actions are found in directorate-level plans. The link between risk and budget was also discussed, with confirmation that financial risks inform budget decisions and reserve strategies. Climate and nature emergency risks are integrated into the register and aligned with the Community Corporate Plan. The de-escalation of legal challenge risks was explained as a reflection of improved internal capacity to manage them at the directorate level. Financial risk grading was questioned in light of increasing pressures, but the Council noted improved risk management practices justify the reduced grading, with more detail to follow in the outturn report. School deficits are addressed within broader financial risks, and risk prioritisation – such as comparing Net Zero targets with school attendance – depends on impact, likelihood, and the Council's capacity to influence outcomes.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member. He emphasised the importance of the risk register in identifying and managing strategic risks to the organisation. He

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

highlighted the need to understand the risk environment, the progress of mitigations, and the potential need to refer issues to other committees. He noted the key changes in the risk register, including adjustments to workforce risk, reduction in school attendance risk, division of climate risk, and de-escalation of two risks to directorate risk registers.

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Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 10th June 2025

Report Item 4: Welsh Language Annual Report 2024–25

The committee reviewed the council's performance in meeting Welsh language standards. Officers explained that the preferred option for improving cost-effectiveness in translation services is to collaborate with Torfaen, due to the similarity in document types. A "non-opinion review" was described as an internal audit tool used to identify compliance gaps without issuing a formal audit opinion. While 100% compliance remains the goal, the review helps guide improvements. Questions were raised about missing standards in the report, which officers clarified were excluded based on the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidelines. Of the 53 staff who completed training, most were at beginner level and the rest at foundation. Maintaining parity between Welsh and English digital content remains a challenge, addressed through monitoring and training. It was acknowledged that few senior officers are fluent in Welsh, though efforts are underway to improve this. A recent incident in Abergavenny highlighted the need for Welsh-speaking media representatives. Initiatives like lanyards and Welsh tips in newsletters have been well received, and future plans include expanding opportunities for staff to use Welsh. Collaboration with other public bodies is ongoing through regional groups and social care initiatives. Officers welcomed a member's suggestion to explore community learning opportunities. On costs, it was explained that translation is the main expense – over £226,000 last year – while most other compliance work is embedded in staff roles and not separately tracked. AI was discussed as a potential cost-saving tool, though it cannot replace human translators due to the need for proofreading. However, systems like translation memory tools used by Torfaen may offer future efficiencies.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the report and their responses to the committee's questions.

Report Item 5: Public Protection Performance 2024–25

The committee examined the performance of the public protection service. High-risk food premises are inspected based on the nature of their operations and compliance levels, with inspection frequency adjusted accordingly. A drop in FOI requests was attributed to a previous high-profile case that had inflated numbers. The Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) process remains voluntary, with referrals based on risk. The vacancy in the head of public protection post is under review by senior leadership. Performance dips in areas like fly-tipping and noise complaints were linked to

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

increased workloads, with prioritisation now based on risk and outcomes. Housing above takeaways, particularly regarding fire safety, is a renewed focus this year. Officers noted a rise in animal welfare concerns, especially on farms, due to the cost-of-living crisis. Each notifiable disease case, including E.coli, is thoroughly investigated using the Taran database, which helps identify patterns and potential sources. Enforcement of single-use vape regulations is challenging, with support from Welsh Government and collaboration with HMRC. Online sales of vapes present additional difficulties. The team balances reactive and proactive work through daily risk assessments and service plans. Some proactive work, like inspections of housing above takeaways, was postponed but is now being prioritised. Staff safety during enforcement is managed through risk assessments and police involvement when necessary.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions, and expressed thanks on behalf of the committee and residents for the team's valuable work.

Report Item 6: Registration Services Annual Report 2024–25

The committee reviewed the performance of registration services. The lower percentage of timely birth registrations was explained by the small number of births in Monmouthshire, which skews statistics. Delays in death registrations were attributed to the new statutory process involving medical examiners, which is expected to stabilise. A notable rise in wedding ceremonies was linked to post-COVID backlogs and Monmouthshire's growing popularity as a wedding destination. Upcoming legislative changes aim to digitise the registration process, though timelines remain uncertain. Despite seasonal pressures, the part-time ceremonial staff have maintained service levels, with strong teamwork and flexibility. Concerns were raised about the lack of progress on marriage law reforms following the Law Commission's review, but registrars continue to monitor and address issues like sham or coerced marriages. Clarification was provided that only 21 births occurred in Monmouthshire, with the remainder registered on behalf of Torfaen, while the 1,019 deaths figure reflects actual local deaths.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions, and expressed gratitude from the committee to the wider team.

SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CALL-IN RELATING TO THE LETTING OF THE FORMER ABERGAVENNY LIBRARY

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 25th June 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet the opportunity to re-consider the decision taken by Cabinet on 21st May 2025 concerning the 'Letting of the Former Abergavenny Library'. This follows the call-in of the decision and the subsequent recommendation of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 11th June 2025 to refer the matter to the Cabinet for re-consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the discussion held at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 11th June 2025 and makes a decision whether to:
- i) Accept the Cabinet Decision made on 21st May 2025; or
 - ii) Reconsider the decision.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Council's Constitution gives scrutiny committees the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet. This is one of the ways in which the executive can be held to account.
- 3.2 The Constitution requires that a Scrutiny meeting is held within 15 working days of the receipt of a call-in of an Executive decision to consider the call-in request. Following debate of the issue, the Committee can either:
- Accept the Cabinet decision; or
 - Refer the matter back to the Cabinet with reasons; or
 - Refer the matter to full Council for consideration with reasons.
- 3.3 On 21st May 2025, Cabinet considered a report relating to the letting of the former Abergavenny Library. The decision resolved by Cabinet was to accept the recommendations as set out below:

That Cabinet agrees the following:

- (i) To award the lease tender to Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Chief Officer for Resources to negotiate the lease in accordance with the tender award.

3.4 The decision was subsequently called in for the following reasons:

Lack of Proper Scrutiny/Due Process and Community Consultation:

- This decision was made without being presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee(s) prior to Cabinet approval. Given the sensitivity, scale, and length of the lease, this represents a significant failure of democratic oversight.
- Public interest decisions of this magnitude should go through full scrutiny to ensure community consultation and transparency.
- Democratic community engagement is necessary in view of the lack of public scrutiny due to no planning approval being needed so that residents/businesses/faiths and the general public do not have the usual opportunity to comment on issues such as traffic congestion, parking, noise and restrictions on hours of operation.
- The Council and Forward Plan was amended on the 21st of October 2024 on the Future of the Abergavenny Library for a report to Cabinet on the 6th of November 2024. It was not on the Place Committee agenda of the 21st October 2024, and the next meeting was on the 7th of November 2024 after the Cabinet report of the 6th of November 2024.
- The Cabinet report of the 6th of November 2024 details the positive impact which was not reflected in the invitation to tender with the proposal to offer the site for community or commercial use to enhance the availability of opportunities that are open, accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.
- In addition, the item has not been kept on the Council and forward planner for the period it should have been and not even included in the Place Committee agenda of the 22nd of May when other Cabinet reports of the 21st of May were included.
- The Invitation to Tender underlined the Planning Status with its current D1 use class (as a library) but did not fully detail commercial options on change of use including retail and wholesale use, despite the covenant on the land allowing for such use.

Questionable Timing and Limited Market Exposure:

- The property was marketed for only four weeks in December 2024, during a well-known period of reduced public and business engagement due to the festive season.
- This limited window may have inhibited fair market exposure, potentially impacting the breadth and quality of submissions.

Best Value and Financial Sustainability Concerns:

- A lease of 30 years for £500 per month (£6,000 per annum) on a prominent, centrally located historic building raises serious Best Value concerns under the Local Government Act 1999, which places a duty on local authorities to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”
- Although a tender offered the same rental figure, it is unclear whether this reflects true market value. There has been no independent valuation, and a 30-year commitment without such due diligence is premature.
- Lack of Certainty over the need for a council building over such a long period.

- 3.5 The Special Place Scrutiny Committee held on 11th June 2025 considered the call-in of this decision and the Members who called in the decision outlined their reasons for doing so. The Cabinet Member for Resources attended and provided detailed responses.
- 3.6 The Cabinet decision report provides full context of the key issues relating to the decision taken on 21st May 2025, outlined in section 3 together with an options appraisal provided under section 5, accessed via [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 21st May, 2025, 4.30 pm - Modern Council](#) .
- 3.7 Appendix 1 provides the formal minute of the call-in and a fuller account of the debate held in the public domain. The live stream recording of the meeting is also available via [Agenda for Place Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 11th June, 2025, 5.30 pm - Modern Council](#) .
- 3.8 The debate related to the specific matters raised in the calling-in of the decision, the discussion focussing on the detailed points outlined in the Call-in Request (as above), which were responded to via the Cabinet Member in the draft minutes (attached as Appendix 1).
- 3.9 Following the debate the committee voted to refer the matter back to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration, for the following reasons:

The Cabinet Member is requested to carry out a re-tender process with the following stipulations:

- **Independent Valuation:** An independent valuation of rental income should be carried out.
- **Tender Time Frame:** A reasonable time frame should be agreed upon for the tender process.
- **Building Survey:** An independent building survey should be undertaken to ascertain the condition of the building and the costs of necessary works.
- **Maintenance Compliance:** Ensure the building is maintained to comply with its importance, allowing potential bidders to have full possession of the facts so they can bid accordingly.
- **Community Consultation:** Community consultation is essential, involving local residents and businesses in decisions about the Carnegie Library building.
- **Historic Importance:** Proper consideration is given to the building's historic and monumental importance to Abergavenny and its people.
- **Reconsider Selling:** The potential sale of the building should be reconsidered and included in the consultation process with the people of Abergavenny.

The votes were recorded as follows:

- Four Members voted to accept the Cabinet Member's decision.
- Four Members voted to refer the matter to the Cabinet Member with reasons.
- One Member voted to refer the matter to Full Council.

The Chair exercised the right to a casting vote in referring the matter back to the Cabinet Member with the reasons outlined above.

- 4.0 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**
- 4.1 There are no direct considerations from this report.
- 5. EVALUATION CRITERIA**
- 5.1 Not applicable.
- 6. REASONS:**
- 6.1 To refer the Cabinet's decision taken on 21st May 2025 on the Letting of the Former Abergavenny Library to Cabinet, following scrutiny undertaken by the Place Scrutiny Committee on 11th June 2025.
- 7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**
- 7.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
- 8. CONSULTEES:**
- Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships
Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Monitoring Officer
- 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**
- Appendix 1: Draft Minutes of the Place Scrutiny Committee held on 11th June 2025 on the Call-in concerning the Letting of the Former Abergavenny Library.
- 10. AUTHOR:**
- Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
- 11. CONTACT DETAILS:**
- Tel: 01633 644233
E-mail: hazelilett@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Place Scrutiny Call-in 11th June 2025

Note: the following minutes focus on the challenge from members – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting is at [Agenda for Place Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 11th June, 2025, 5.30 pm - Modern Council](#)

Attendees:

Councillors: Jane Lucas, Lisa Dymock, Jackie Strong, Tomos Davies, Martyn Groucutt, Tudor Thomas, John Crook, Louise Brown, Simon Howarth, Rachel Buckler, Ben Callard, Alistair Neill, Angela Sandles, Laura Wright, Richard John, Steven Garratt

Officers:

Paul Matthews, Peter Davies, Nick Keyse, Matt Gatehouse, Sharran Lloyd, Jane Harvey, Hazel Ilett, Robert McGowan

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Councillor Emma Bryn, who was being substituted by Councillor Simon Howarth.

2. Declarations of Interest.

None received.

3. Public Open Forum.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were five speakers at the Public Open Forum, which included two representations made by Councillors of Abergavenny Town Council and three separate inputs from members of the public. A video that had been submitted by a resident in advance of the meeting was also shown and a written representation was read out by the Scrutiny Manager on behalf of another resident. There was a significant public presence at the meeting, both in the public gallery and on the landing where observers were able to view the live stream.

The various contributions made to the Public Open Forum highlighted the following:

Abergavenny Town Council:

- Abergavenny Town Council expressed strong support for the Muslim Association's plans, citing Abergavenny's tradition of religious tolerance and the

importance of equality for all faiths. They noted that the Muslim Association has committed to maintaining the building and keeping it in community ownership. They advised that the Muslim Association is already active in the town and aims to create an inclusive centre open to all.

- They noted that Abergavenny has been a sanctuary town for diverse communities, including Syrian, Afghan, and Ukrainian families.

Residents and Businesses:

- Several speakers questioned the repurposing of the Carnegie Library, a historically significant building originally intended for public use as a library.
- Several speakers criticised the process for lacking transparency and suggested there was a need for public consultation.
- Some residents and trustees advised that they had only learned about the proposal through social media.
- Residents spoke of the impact on them and raised concerns about noise, light pollution, and disruption to elderly and vulnerable residents in nearby almshouses, while echoing concerns about safety, especially at night.
- Several speakers highlighted existing parking congestion and potential traffic issues, causing disruption to local businesses and deliveries.
- A speaker questioned the fairness of granting a 30-year lease to the Muslim Association compared to shorter leases for other community services.
- A speaker called for halting the process until a full public consultation is conducted.

4. Call-in of the decision taken by Cabinet on the 21st May 2025 in relation to the letting of the former Abergavenny Library.

The Chair thanked the members of the public for their contributions and explained that the Committee would now begin formal debate of the call-in. She asked the Scrutiny Manager to briefly explain the call-in process that would be followed at the meeting, in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The Scrutiny Manager advised that the meeting had been scheduled to debate a decision that had been made but had not taken effect concerning the letting of the former Abergavenny Library. The Call-in process and order of speaking was explained to all who were present.

The Cabinet decision report provides full context of the key issues relating to the decision taken on 21st May 2025, accessed via [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 21st May, 2025, 4.30 pm - Modern Council](#). For context however, the decision that had been resolved by Cabinet on 21st May 2025 was to accept the following recommendations:

That Cabinet agrees the following:

- (i) To award the lease tender to Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association.
- (ii) (ii) To delegate authority to the Chief Officer for Resources to negotiate the lease in accordance with the tender award.

The Chair asked the members who had called in the decision to present their reasons for calling in the decision, as stated in the Call-in Request Form:

1) Lack of Proper Scrutiny/Due Process and Community Consultation:

- This decision was made without being presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee(s) prior to Cabinet approval. Given the sensitivity, scale, and length of the lease, this represents a significant failure of democratic oversight.
- Public interest decisions of this magnitude should go through full scrutiny to ensure community consultation and transparency.
- Democratic community engagement is necessary in view of the lack of public scrutiny due to no planning approval being needed so that residents/businesses/faiths and the general public do not have the usual opportunity to comment on issues such as traffic congestion, parking, noise and restrictions on hours of operation.
- The Council and Forward Plan was amended on the 21st of October 2024 on the Future of the Abergavenny Library for a report to Cabinet on the 6th of November 2024. It was not on the Place Committee agenda of the 21st October 2024, and the next meeting was on the 7th of November 2024 after the Cabinet report of the 6th of November 2024.
- The Cabinet report of the 6th of November 2024 details the positive impact which was not reflected in the invitation to tender with the proposal to offer the site for community or commercial use to enhance the availability of opportunities that are open, accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.
- In addition, the item has not been kept on the Council and forward planner for the period it should have been and not even included in the Place Committee agenda of the 22nd of May when other Cabinet reports of the 21st of May were included.

- The Invitation to Tender underlined the Planning Status with its current D1 use class (as a library) but did not fully detail commercial options on change of use including retail and wholesale use, despite the covenant on the land allowing for such use.

2) **Questionable Timing and Limited Market Exposure:**

- The property was marketed for only four weeks in December 2024, during a well-known period of reduced public and business engagement due to the festive season.
- This limited window may have inhibited fair market exposure, potentially impacting the breadth and quality of submissions.

3) **Best Value and Financial Sustainability Concerns:**

- A lease of 30 years for £500 per month (£6,000 per annum) on a prominent, centrally located historic building raises serious Best Value concerns under the Local Government Act 1999, which places a duty on local authorities to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness."
- Although a tender offered the same rental figure, it is unclear whether this reflects true market value. There has been no independent valuation, and a 30-year commitment without such due diligence is premature.
- Lack of Certainty over the need for a council building over such a long period.

The Call-in Members outlined their reasons for calling the decision in (as above) and made the following additional points:

Councillor Howarth

- Councillor Howarth emphasised the importance of transparency and proper process in Council decisions. He noted that the library was not included in the planner for the Council's scrutiny meetings, which prevented members from discussing its transfer to asset management.
- Councillor Howarth highlighted that the decision to transfer the library to asset management was made without giving Council members the opportunity to scrutinise and discuss it. He suggested that previous decisions were removed from the planner, which he believed undermined transparency and accountability.
- Councillor Howarth called for changes in the Council's constitution to ensure that decisions remain on the planner and are subject to proper scrutiny.
- He expressed concern that the lack of consultation and transparency has let down the people of Monmouthshire and Abergavenny.

Councillor Buckler

- Councillor Rachel Buckler emphasised the historical and cultural significance of the Carnegie Library to the town of Abergavenny.
- She highlighted the lack of community consultation and engagement regarding the decision to convert the library into a mosque.
- Councillor Buckler shared feedback from residents who felt disconnected, ignored, and stressed about parking issues and the lack of information provided to them.
- She criticised the decision-making process, noting that residents were first informed through the local paper or Facebook, which she found unacceptable.
- Councillor Buckler questioned the appropriateness of granting a certificate of lawfulness for the building without proper scrutiny and community input.
- She raised concerns about the financial viability and due diligence of the decision, including the lack of details on grants and funding.
- Councillor Buckler called for higher standards of transparency and scrutiny in Council decisions, reflecting the expectations of Monmouthshire residents.

Councillor Louise Brown

- Councillor Brown emphasised the importance of scrutiny, due process, and community consultation in Council decisions.
- She highlighted the lack of public scrutiny due to the decision not requiring planning approval, which prevented residents and businesses from commenting on issues like traffic, parking, and noise.
- Councillor Brown suggested there were procedural irregularities, such as the library's disposal not being listed on the Council's forward planner for the scrutiny meeting, which she viewed as a breach of procedural rules.
- She suggested there had been limited marketing exposure of the property, noting that it was marketed for less than four weeks during a period of reduced engagement due to the festive season.
- Councillor Brown questioned the financial aspects of the decision, arguing that the rent of £6,000 per year was significantly lower than the market value, which she estimated to be between £20,000 and £25,000 per year. She called for an independent valuation of the property and suggested that the Council should use a specialised agent to facilitate the disposal, as outlined in the Council's asset management strategy.
- Councillor Brown emphasised the need for community consultation before drafting the lease, rather than after, to ensure transparency and public input.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member, Councillor Callard to formally respond. In doing so, Councillor Callard made the following key points:

- Councillor Callard explained that the decision to award the lease was brought to Cabinet to give it more visibility, even though it could have been made by officers under delegated powers. He noted that the Council has entered into many leases without pre-award scrutiny or call-ins, suggesting that this process was consistent with past practices.
- Councillor Callard emphasised that the building was declared surplus, and the decision was not called in at that time. The tender process was transparent, and the highest-scoring bid was selected. He argued that requiring scrutiny for every lease would be impractical and counterproductive, potentially delaying the use of Council assets.
- Councillor Callard addressed concerns about parking, acknowledging the issue, but stating that the building's location was suitable for its proposed use, with nearby car parks available. He mentioned that the Muslim Community Association (MMCA) was aware of the need to mitigate parking impacts and planned to conduct community outreach after the lease was signed.
- Councillor Callard defended the marketing period, stating that the number of tenders received indicated sufficient market exposure. He argued against the need for independent valuation or external agents, citing the Council's in-house capabilities and the financial constraints. Councillor Callard expressed confidence in the MMCA's commitment to the community and their ability to maintain the building.

The Chair invited Nick Keyse, the Development Manager for Estates and Sustainability to provide additional comments:

- Nick clarified that long lease agreements are standard for community assets, as they provide assurance for securing grant funding from organisations such as the National Lottery and Sports Wales. He explained that grant funders require long-term leases to ensure their investments are protected and not subject to changes in use.
- Nick added that the final terms of the lease, including aspects like break clauses and rent reviews, are still to be negotiated and delegated to officers. He noted that a break clause could undermine the assurance needed for grant funding, suggesting that such clauses might not be included in the final lease terms.

Key points raised by the Committee Members and visiting Members:

The Chair invited questions initially from the Committee Members and then from other Members present, which were answered by Councillor Callard and Nick Keyse.

- Councillor Davies emphasised the importance of ensuring that the lease agreement aligns with the Council's fiduciary duty to act in the taxpayers' best financial interest. He referenced a February 2023 asset management paper that identified the Carnegie Library as a priority for commercial opportunities, estimating its rental value at £25,000 to £30,000 per annum or a potential sale value of over £300,000. He questioned whether the proposed lease agreement aligned with the goal of maximising the commercial potential of the property. He enquired if there was another tender that was deemed more commercially viable than the successful one. He also asked about the number of leases that achieved market rates among the 37 leases entered into by the Council since 2022.

Councillor Callard acknowledged that the tender did not achieve the commercial value initially estimated, but emphasised the importance of supporting community assets, even if it means foregoing some income. He confirmed that the successful tender was the most financially competitive among the shortlisted tenders. Councillor Callard did not have specific data on how many of the 37 leases achieved market rates but suggested that this information could be reviewed at a performance and overview scrutiny committee meeting.

- Councillor Groucutt expressed pride in the Council's commitment to making Monmouthshire and Abergavenny a community of sanctuary, highlighting the positive integration of people from conflict areas into the local community. He emphasised that the proposed mosque would serve multiple purposes, including being an educational, social, economic, and recreational centre, not just a place of prayer. He noted the significant growth of the Muslim population in Monmouthshire and their important role in the community, particularly in Abergavenny with its major hospital. He mentioned the inappropriate past use of the building as a pupil referral unit and argued against leaving the building empty to deteriorate. He supported the idea of the building being used by the Muslim community, seeing it as a positive contribution to the town.
- Councillor Brown reiterated her concerns around the limited marketing period of less than four weeks during the festive season, which may have impacted the breadth and quality of submissions. She questioned the financial viability of the lease, noting discrepancies between the estimated market rent and the actual lease amount. She reinforced her view that there was a need for an independent valuation and a period of community consultation before finalising the lease. She stated that the invitation to tender did not fully detail the range of potential uses for the property, which could have impacted the best consideration obtained.

Councillor Callard acknowledged the challenges of consultation when entering into leases and emphasised the need to take well-reasoned actions that benefit the community. He mentioned that the building was offered on a full repairing lease,

which is a significant investment and may not be attractive to all businesses. Councillor Callard argued that the proposed use of the building as a community centre and mosque would bring people into the town centre, benefiting local businesses without competing with them. He reiterated that the tender process was fair and transparent, and the successful tender was the most financially competitive among the shortlisted tenders. Councillor Callard suggested that the Council's financial situation necessitates using in-house resources for valuations and marketing rather than hiring external consultants.

- Councillor Howarth repeated his concerns about the lack of transparency and proper scrutiny in the decision-making process. He questioned the consultation process, asking if Abergavenny Town Council or other consultees were involved before the Cabinet meeting. The member expressed frustration with the timing of decisions, noting that the scrutiny committee meeting was held the day after the Cabinet meeting, which did not allow for proper review.

Councillor Callard explained that the delegation of powers for awarding leases typically falls to officers, but the decision was brought to Cabinet to give it more visibility due to the importance of the building. He mentioned that the decision to declare the property surplus was not called in, suggesting that concerns should have been raised at that stage. Councillor Callard argued that bringing every lease decision to scrutiny would be counterproductive and hinder the Council's ability to function effectively as a landlord. He acknowledged the issues with parking but emphasised that the building's location is well-served by nearby car parks and that the Muslim Association is aware of the need to mitigate the impact on the local community. Councillor Callard clarified that the consultation with the community would occur after the lease is signed, as it provides certainty for the group to conduct outreach. He confirmed that the consultees for the Cabinet report are listed at the bottom of the report and that he made a courtesy call to the Principal Officer of Abergavenny Town Council when the papers were published.

- Councillor Dymock questioned the duration of the lease and at what point a 30-year lease was agreed. She expressed concerns about the lack of consultation and transparency, suggesting that this is a recurring problem that needs to be addressed. The member asked what steps were taken to assess whether the limited marketing period would result in a fair representation of potential leases. She enquired why the property was not consistently kept on the Council's Forward Planner. The member sought clarification on how the Council plans to ensure ongoing transparency and engagement post-decision.

Councillor Callard explained that the decision to declare the property surplus was made in Cabinet and reiterated that the decision could have been called in at that stage. He explained that the 30-year lease term was part of the tender submission

and not something initially offered by MCC. He mentioned that the long lease term allows the tenants to access grant funding, which is essential for maintaining and investing in the building. Councillor Callard emphasised that the lease agreements include mechanisms to review certain aspects, ensuring value for money and compliance with the terms. He highlighted that many of the county's heritage buildings are maintained through grant funding, which long leases help secure. He emphasised that the Council is not in the business of keeping empty buildings and will dispose of assets when prudent to do so. He also acknowledged the challenges of consultation when entering into leases and questioned the operational feasibility of bringing every lease decision to scrutiny. He suggested that post-decision scrutiny might be more appropriate but emphasised the need for well-reasoned actions that benefit the community. Councillor Callard reiterated that the building was offered on a full repairing lease, which is a significant investment and may not be attractive to all businesses.

- Councillor Buckler questioned the adequacy of the consultation process, expressing that many people were unaware of the decision and felt that consultation after the decision was not acceptable. She emphasised the importance of the Carnegie Library to the community and questioned why the residents of Abergavenny were not asked about their preferences for the building's use. The member reiterated that the call-in was made because the process did not involve sufficient community engagement.

Councillor Callard acknowledged the challenge of ensuring everyone is aware of Council decisions, noting that many people are busy with their lives and may not follow Council activities closely. He defended the decision to elevate the matter to Cabinet, arguing that it was a step towards giving the decision more visibility. Councillor Callard explained that it is difficult to find a use for the building that would satisfy everyone and emphasised the responsibility of elected members to make decisions in the best interest of the community. He suggested that taking the decision to full Council would not have changed the outcome and reiterated his confidence in the process followed.

The Chair invited the local ward Member Councillor Laura Wright to make a statement:

Councillor Wright

Councillor Wright expressed her support for the decision to lease the old library building to MMCA, noting that she voted in favour of the lease at her first Cabinet meeting. She emphasised the importance of scrutiny and transparent decision-making, but defended the established procedures followed in awarding the lease. Councillor Wright highlighted that the proposal from MMCA scored highest in the evaluation matrix, which assessed demand, viability, use suitability, and financial standing. She

acknowledged the concerns of residents and businesses about the lack of consultation but pointed out that MMCA has committed to community engagement before occupying the building. Councillor Wright referenced the concerns about parking, noise, and light pollution, stating that MMCA representatives would be willing to meet with residents to address these issues. She reiterated that the lease was awarded based on a competitive process and that the chosen proposal met the Council's duties on financial optimisation and community well-being. Councillor Wright concluded by urging committee members to support the decision, emphasising the social value and inclusivity that the lease would bring to the community.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair asked the Scrutiny Manager to explain the grounds for moving into a closed session, if desired by the Committee. The Scrutiny Manager explained the process to the public and those in attendance, citing the Local Government Act 1972, which allows the exclusion of the public for the discussion of exempt information, providing that an officer has made an assessment that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Chair asked the report author to make an assessment of the public interest and to advise the committee on the basis for the exemption. She explained she would then request the committee to accept the officer's determination and vote on it before moving into an exempt session.

The Proper Officer specified that the grounds for exemption are based on paragraph 14 of the Local Government Act, which related to information concerning the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information. He confirmed that this assessment supports moving into a closed session to discuss sensitive financial or business information.

The committee voted to move into closed session by a vote of 5-4. A short break took place whilst the press and public were asked to leave the meeting. Councillors Wright and Garratt left the meeting.

Part 2 of the Meeting (Public) ~ Formal outcome of the scrutiny

The Chair welcomed the public back into the meeting. Thanks were given to the Cabinet Member and officers. The Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation to the members of the public for their contributions and their time in attending.

The Chair advised the Committee that they had three options available to them, which were:

1. To accept the decision
2. To refer the decision to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration (with reasons)
3. To refer the decision to full Council

The Committee voted on the above options. Following the vote, the Committee agreed to refer the decision back to Cabinet Member for reconsideration, for the following reasons:

The Cabinet Member is requested to carry out a re-tender process with the following stipulations:

- **Independent Valuation:** An independent valuation of rental income should be carried out.
- **Tender Time Frame:** A reasonable time frame should be agreed upon for the tender process.
- **Building Survey:** An independent building survey should be undertaken to ascertain the condition of the building and the costs of necessary works.
- **Maintenance Compliance:** Ensure the building is maintained to comply with its importance, allowing potential bidders to have full possession of the facts so they can bid accordingly.
- **Community Consultation:** Community consultation is essential, involving local residents and businesses in decisions about the Carnegie Library building.
- **Historic Importance:** Proper consideration is given to the building's historic and monumental importance to Abergavenny and its people.
- **Reconsider Selling:** The potential sale of the building should be reconsidered and included in the consultation process with the people of Abergavenny.

The votes were recorded as follows:

- Four Members voted to accept the Cabinet Member's decision.
- Four Members voted to refer the matter to the Cabinet Member with reasons.
- One Member voted to refer to Full Council.

The Chair exercised the right to a casting vote in referring the matter back to the Cabinet Member (Option 2).

The meeting closed at 20:49.

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SUBJECT:	Strategic Risk Assessment
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	25th June 2025
DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet members review the strategic risk assessment and assess whether it provides a realistic and evidenced appraisal of the strategic risks facing the authority over the next three years.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The strategic risk management process ensures that strategic risks are identified and monitored by the authority; Risk controls are put in place that are appropriate and proportionate; Senior managers and elected members systematically review the strategic risks facing the authority.
- 3.2 The Council's strategic risk management policy and guidance and risk assessment helps ensure strategic risks are identified and assessed robustly, risk controls are put in place that are appropriate and proportionate, and risks are supported by effective mitigations to ensure, as far as possible, risk reduction/risk management.
- 3.3 Strategic risks covered by the assessment are typically risks which could significantly jeopardise the council's ability to achieve its objectives, statutory plans and/or provide operational services as planned. The risk assessment only covers high and medium level strategic risks. Lower level or operational risks are not registered unless they are projected to escalate within the three years covered. The strategic risk assessment should continue to focus on medium term risks to service delivery.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 provides the latest strategic risk register for the council. The assessment is a detailed document. Any significant changes or updates made to each risk can be found in the 'key changes' column in the summary table at the start of the full register. The council continues to operate in a dynamic environment and has controls in place to assess, manage and mitigate, as far as possible, a variety of risks. The strategic risk register is a live document and is continually updated based on the latest evidence. This will include adjusting the focus, detail and risk levels of risks where necessary. Some key changes made in the last six months can be found below:
- Risk 4, related to workforce, has been reworded due to a change in the nature of the risk; this risk now focuses more on the council's own workforce planning challenges rather than external labour market changes.
 - The post-mitigation risk scores for risk 9a, related to school attendance, have reduced from high (12) to medium (8) to reflect progress made in implementing mitigating action and positive movement in primary attendance data.
 - Risk 11, related to climate, has been divided into two separate risks to better reflect differing causes and mitigation required. This also allows for separate assessment of risk levels and targets.
 - The risk relating to increased demand on council services due to the increased cost-of-living, previously risk 12, has been de-escalated from the strategic risk register to directorate risk registers to be managed. This reflects the mitigations put in place for the organisation to support and manage the demand. This recognises that pressures remain for families due to the increased cost of living, and this risk will continue to be managed on the directorate risk registers of those services still seeing more families requiring additional public service support as a result of the cost-of-living.

- The risk relating to the increased risk of legal challenge, previously risk 14, has been de-escalated from the strategic risk register. The inherent level of risk relating to legal challenge is carried and mitigated by the legal team.

3.5 Cabinet agreed an updated Strategic Risk Management Policy in June 2024, including the further definition of the council's risk appetite. A period of transition in implementing the policy was agreed to allow the council time to strengthen arrangements in line with the revised policy. Progress made so far in implementing the updated policy includes:

- Adapting and updating the format of the strategic risk register, including applying risk appetite levels and target risk scores.
- Developing directorate risk registers, in a phased approach, and embedding these in service planning arrangements.
- An assessment of the effectiveness of each of the risk control arrangements that integrate with strategic risk management policy, these are Health and Safety, Emergency Planning, Insurance, Finance, Internal Audit, Information Governance & Cyber Security. The outcome of this assessment was reported to Governance & Audit Committee, this included actions to strengthen these arrangements.

There remain some areas for development to strengthen arrangements, including:

- Developing the remaining directorate risk registers, to embed these in the risk management process.
- Strengthening risk management training and awareness for all officers.

3.6 As part of the current reporting round, target risk scores have been introduced. These indicate the optimal risk score the council has assessed it could achieve, following successful mitigation. This needs to be set in the context of available resource and the bearing the council's actions can have on reducing the likelihood and/or impact of the risk. In most cases, mitigating actions result in a change to the likelihood of the risk, rather than the potential consequences, as our actions are generally aimed at reducing the chance of a negative event occurring rather than lessening its impact. There will be exceptions depending on the risk. Some target risk scores may remain the same as post-mitigation risk scores; this indicates that risk scores are not able to be lowered further with available mitigation. Risk scores will be continuously reviewed to ensure they fairly reflect realistic ambition.

3.7 A risk radar has been developed in line with the revised policy commitments. This is included as appendix 2. The radar outlines some of the potential risks that Monmouthshire may face over coming years. This report draws on national and global emerging risks identified in a range of horizon scanning reports, including most prominently the World Economic Forum (WEF) global risks report, UK Government's National Risk Register and Welsh Government's Future Trends Report. Evidence from this will help inform risk management by highlighting the key uncertainties and challenges that may affect our organisation's objectives and operations. Consideration will be given to the annual Risk Radar Report when identifying and managing strategic risks and in the Council's wider service planning.

3.8 The strategic risk assessment was presented to Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee on the 3rd June 2025 to enable the committee to fulfil its role of scrutinising the risk assessment and responsibility holders to seek assurance that strategic risks have been appropriately identified and risk is being appropriately managed. An overview of the strategic risk register was also presented to Governance and Audit Committee on the 12th June 2025 to fulfil the committee's role of assessing the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements. The feedback from these committees has been considered in the continued update of the strategic risk register and implementation of the policy. Any key conclusions will be shared with Cabinet.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 4.1 The purpose of the whole authority strategic risk assessment is to identify and assess risks robustly and ensure risk controls are put in place that are appropriate and proportionate. Any specific mitigating actions that have significant policy implications would need to be subject to a separate decision and a full impact assessment completed at that time.
- 4.2 The risk assessment specifically references risks around safeguarding and corporate parenting and how they are being mitigated. It also includes activity to mitigate risks relevant to the socio-economic duty and Future Generations.
- 4.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment was completed on the Council's revised strategic risk management policy.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

- 5.1 The Strategic Risk Assessment is updated based on the latest evidence available in line with the Council's strategic risk management policy. Risks that are identified as needing to be managed through the strategic risk register are included. The structure of the register has been developed based on information specified in the policy as being required. Updates to the strategic risk management policy and guidance consider feedback received and take account of the Council's current governance arrangements.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- 6.1 The strategic risk management policy sets the criteria that needs to be considered when identifying and mitigating strategic risks. Actions in the risk register set timescales and responsibility holders for delivery. The risk assessment will be subject to continuous review as part of the authority's performance management framework. An up-to-date risk register will be accessible to members on the council's intranet – The Hub. The risk management policy and guidance set the reporting requirements of the risk assessment to Governance and Audit Committee, Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
- 6.2 The risk management policy sets an assessment of the effectiveness of the risk management framework will be undertaken six monthly and any subsequent action identified implemented. The strategic risk policy and guidance will be reviewed annually and adapted if required, to address any external and internal changes. Any material changes will need to be agreed with the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To provide timely, relevant information on strategic risks and the strategic risk management process as part of the performance management framework for ensuring the authority is well run and able to contribute to achieving the Council's purpose.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Resource implications are associated with some risks and in implementing actions to manage them. There are no additional resource implications as a result of implementing the strategic risk management process.

9. CONSULTTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council Risk Policy and Guidance

11. AUTHORS:

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Monmouthshire County Council Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment

Ref	Potential Risk	Risk Level (score) – Pre mitigation	Risk Level (score) – Post mitigation	Target risk score	Key changes
Risks to resources					
1	Potential risk that: Financial pressures and increased complexity of demand for services, impacts on delivering all of the council's commitments in the Community and Corporate plan, leading to longer term outcomes for the county not being achieved	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 - High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 - Medium (8)	Medium (8)	A self-assessment of the council's community and corporate plan objectives and review of the enabling strategies is being developed to assess progress in meeting objectives. This will be presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee in July.
1b	Potential risk that: A lack of political majority makes it harder to ensure timely and appropriate decision making which results in delays and uncertainty in some projects	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 - High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (9) 2026/27 – Medium (9) 2027/28 - Medium (9)	Medium (9)	A number of special meetings continue to be held to ensure decisions are scrutinised in advance of Cabinet/Council decision.
2	Potential risk that: Some services will become financially unsustainable in the short to medium term in their current form due to increasing demand and continuing financial pressures	2025/26 – High (16) 2026/27 – High (16) 2027/28 - High (16)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 - High (12)	High (12)	Work continues to shape the wider programme of service change that will include an ongoing assessment of key service pressures, the risks and modelling assumptions that sit alongside this, with the aim to establish a clear plan and approach to address the medium-term budget shortfalls forecast.
3	Potential risk that: The authority is unable to maintain key infrastructure and meet other identified pressures due to insufficient capital funding availability	2025/26 – High (16) 2026/27 – High (16) 2027/28 – High (16)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	High (12)	The 2025/26 Capital Strategy was approved by Council in March 2025. The strategy sets out the longer-term context in which capital investment decisions are made.
4	Potential risk that: Difficulty recruiting for some posts that require specific skills or qualifications and continued wage inflation will impact the organisation's retention and workforce planning which may affect the delivery of Council services	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8)	Medium (6)	The wording of this risk has been adjusted slightly to ensure focus on internal recruitment and workforce planning challenges rather than external labour market issues.
5	Potential risk that: Loss or corruption of data due to cyber-attack or data mismanagement, which will compromise the delivery of essential council services	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 - Medium (8)	Medium (8)	A range of mitigating actions continue to be undertaken to mitigate this risk.
Risks to service delivery					
6	Potential risk that: Significant harm to a child or adult may occur due to a specific failure of safeguarding arrangements	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 - Medium (8)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 - Medium (8)	Medium (8)	The most recent Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report was presented to Council in October 2024. The report evaluates the progress of the Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2023/24, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2024/25.
7	Potential risk that: Risk of harm if we are unable to meet the care and support needs of some vulnerable children due to an increase in demand and complexity of cases	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (8)	A Placement Development Strategy update was presented to scrutiny in April – this outlines progress in meeting objectives including the development of four additional children's homes/supported accommodation.
8	Potential risk that: Risk of harm if we are unable to meet the care and support needs of some vulnerable adults due to high demand and complexity of cases	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (8)	The annual report of the director of social services was presented to scrutiny in October. Key findings include the need to further develop early advice and assistance provided to prevent people waiting for assessments, and a focus on increasing the number of packages of reablement

					delivered to enable people to remain at home/in their communities.
9a	Potential risk that: Failure to return attendance figures to those seen before the pandemic, particularly among vulnerable pupils and those eligible for free school meals, could lead to a worsening in educational attainment	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 – Medium (8)	Medium (8)	The previous risk 9 has been divided into two related, but separate, risks to better reflect and capture the breadth of mitigating action that is underway. The post-mitigation risk levels have decreased from high (12) to medium (8) to reflect improvements seen in overall attendance levels.
9b	Potential risk that: An increase in behaviours that challenge in schools which may lead to harm to a pupil or member of staff	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (8)	The previous risk 9 has been divided into two related, but separate, risks to better reflect and capture the breadth of mitigating action that is underway. A range of action is being undertaken to mitigate this risk, including the work of the Education Support Team which has enabled those learners most at risk of repeat Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE) or of Permanent Exclusions (PEX) to receive support from specialist professionals.
Risks to policy priorities					
10	Potential risk that: The Council does not support the Replacement Local Development Plan, leading to delays in its adoption which restricts our ability to take forward key policy objective such as job creation, affordable housing development and the adoption of key policies to protect the environment and tackle climate change	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (8)	This Deposit Replacement Local Development Plan was endorsed by Council for consultation, which has been undertaken.
11a	Potential risk that: The council is unable to deliver its commitment to decarbonise its operations in sufficient time to achieve net zero by 2030 because our resources are not commensurate with the scale and complexity of the challenge	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (9)	The previous risk 11 has been divided into two related, but separate, risks to better reflect differing causes and mitigations and allow for separate assessment of risk levels. Risk scores have been reassessed from high (16) to high (12) following division of risk to reflect change in impact of risk.
11b	Potential risk that: The Council is unable to deliver services as a result of the increasing frequency of climate-related emergencies such as floods or extreme heatwaves that increase the demand for emergency responses and can cause damage to infrastructure and the closure of facilities	2025/26 – High (16) 2026/27 – High (16) 2027/28 – High (16)	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	Medium (8)	The previous risk 11 has been divided into two related, but separate, risks to better reflect differing causes and mitigations and allow for separate assessment of risk levels. Post-mitigation risk scores have been re-assessed from high (16) to high (12) following division of risk to reflect breadth of mitigation in place.
12	Potential risk that: Residents are unable to secure or retain suitable accommodation, leading to rising homelessness and outward migration as a result of failures in the housing market	2025/26 – High (12) 2026/27 – High (12) 2027/28 – High (12)	2025/26 – Medium (8) 2026/27 – Medium (8) 2027/28 – Medium (8)	Low (4)	Rapid rehousing is facilitating increased resource into homeless prevention, for example through additional staffing and the availability of the Homeless Prevention Fund. Accommodation has started to be acquired for temporary accommodation use and the first approval has been given to re-purpose a council owned agricultural property.

Risks to resources

Ref & Status	1	Risk	Potential Risk that: Financial pressures and increased complexity of demand for services, impacts on delivering all of the council’s commitments in the Community and Corporate plan, leading to longer term outcomes for the county not being achieved.											
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Paul Matthews (Chief Executive) and Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby (Leader)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee		All All		Risk category and appetite level		Strategic Cautious		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Treat	
Reason why Identified														
The council has an agreed Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 that contains six well-being objectives which focus on the longer-term future of the county and aims to address complex challenges, in line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The objectives include a focus on equality, climate change, economy and skills, housing, care and support and learning. The Council is facing significant budget pressures and increasing complexity in demand for its services. The contemporary policy challenges that need to be addressed, working with communities, are complex and evolving. The immediate pressures the council is facing risks impacting on the ability and resources to deliver the longer-term objectives in the plan and meeting the requirements on the Act.														
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score				
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score					
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Medium (8)				
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
Mitigating Actions														
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress									
Regularly review progress made in implementing the commitments of the community and corporate plan, ensuring resource is targeted in the most pertinent areas			Strategic Leadership Team Six Monthly (December 2024 & June 2025)		A six-month progress report on the delivery of the community and corporate plan was presented to Cabinet in December. This provides a regular review of progress made in implementing the commitments made in the plan and facilitates targeted activity and intervention in areas requiring further development. This also includes an update on measures contained within the revised measured framework, which was approved by Cabinet in September 2024, ensuring an increased focus on outcomes. A full review of progress made in achieving organisational objectives is completed annually in the form of a self-assessment report. This is developed based on a range of evidence from across the organisation. This assessment of progress made during 2024/25 will be presented for scrutiny in July ahead of Council in September.									
Review the progress of the Enabling Strategies which support delivery of the community and corporate plan to ensure alignment of resources with policy priorities			Enabling Strategy lead officers. July 2025		The enabling strategies which support the delivery of the community and corporate plan have now been updated. These include: the People Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Digital and Data strategy. These will be subject to an annual review, as outlined in each strategy, to evaluate progress and ensure they continue to support delivery of the community and corporate plan. A composite report including the annual review of each strategy will be presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee in July.									
Strengthen medium to long term strategic financial planning as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and adapt to reflect the global uncertainty on public finances			Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources Ongoing		The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was approved by Council in July 2024. This strategy provides the strategic framework for the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and a set of key principles to guide medium term financial planning. These two together form the link between the council’s long-term policy objectives and its financial capacity. As part of the development of the strategy, a delivery plan has been established, which sets out clear timescales for completion; this is monitored regularly by Cabinet and Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee. Given significant financial pressures modelled in the MTFP, a programme of change is being implemented that will include an ongoing assessment of key service pressures, the risks and modelling assumptions that sit alongside this, with the aim to establish a clear plan and approach to address the medium-term budget shortfalls forecast.									
Engage with communities to understand challenges and opportunities from their perspective including participation of residents and service users			Strategic Leadership Team Ongoing		The Council has undertaken a range of assessment and research to understand well-being in the county including the well-being assessment, population needs assessment, and research for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). These were used to inform the development of Community and Corporate Plan.									

		<p>A resident survey has been undertaken to understand resident’s views on their local area and council services. The results will be analysed and used to evaluate progress with the community and corporate plan and inform future decision making in the council. A consultation exercise on the proposed 2025/26 budget was also undertaken in January and February 2025.</p> <p>The involvement and participation of and engagement with Monmouthshire’s community groups, public service partners, service users and residents continue to be strengthened to help further understand experiences in the County.</p>
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Ref & Status	1b	Risk	Potential Risk that: A lack of political majority makes it harder to ensure timely and appropriate decision making which results in delays and uncertainty in some projects							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Paul Matthews (Chief Executive) and Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby (Leader)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All All	Risk category and appetite level	Strategic, Service Delivery Cautious		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Tolerate
Reason why Identified										
The local elections of May 2022 resulted in no political party having overall control of the Council. The Labour party was the largest party and formed a new cabinet without an overall majority. The lack of a majority Council has resulted in a politically unstable council, which has had a significant effect on the speed of the organisation’s decision making and the ability to implement policy change. A coalition agreement has subsequently been reached between the Labour party and the Green party, however this isn’t enough to form an overall majority. The democratic process has seen some decisions be subject to call-in which can cause uncertainty in some projects.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2025/26	Likely	Substantial	Medium	9	Medium (9)
2026/27	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2026/27	Likely	Substantial	Medium	9	
2027/28	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2027/28	Likely	Substantial	Medium	9	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Undertake pre-decision scrutiny on relevant decisions			Chief Officer Law & Governance and Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships Ongoing		Each scrutiny committee has an established forward plan. This is shared regularly with department management teams to seek their input on items that will require scrutiny. A number of special meetings have been held to ensure decisions are scrutinised in advance of decisions. There is a need to improve the timeliness of completion of the forward plan to ensure appropriate time can be allocated by scrutiny committees to forthcoming decisions.					
Utilise members seminars and scrutiny workshops to engage and involve all councillors in the development of policy			Chief Officer Law & Governance and Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships Ongoing		Members seminars are being used to share developments and involve councillors on significant forthcoming decisions. Recent seminars include on the provision of primary education and Culture Strategy. Scrutiny workshops are held to seek councillors’ involvement in the development of proposals. These have included the review of primary school catchments and Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment.					
Maintain a fully populated forward work planner of Cabinet and Council business			Chief Officer Law & Governance Ongoing		An established forward work planner for cabinet and Council business is available to all councillors and is a standing item on the agenda of scrutiny committees to inform their own work programme. There is a need to improve the timeliness of completion of the forward plan to ensure all interested parties are sighted as early as possible on planned decisions being brought forward.					

Ref & Status	2	Risk	Potential Risk that: Some services will become financially unsustainable in the short to medium term in their current form due to increasing demand and continuing financial pressures					
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Peter Davies (Deputy Chief Executive) and Cllr Ben Callard (Cabinet Member for Resources)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All All	Risk category and appetite level	Service Delivery Cautious	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat
Reason why Identified								
Councils across the UK are continuing to face significant financial challenges. It is widely acknowledged that local government funding has not kept pace with increased service demand and inflationary pressures. The Council has seen continuing financial headwinds which are severely impacting the service operating environment. The Inflationary drivers impacting pay, supplies and services continue to far outstrip available resources: demand led pressures continue to increase in the areas of Homelessness, Social Care, Children’s additional learning needs, and Transport; interest rates remain significantly higher than seen in previous years; the Council continues to deal with a shortage of staff								

resources due to ongoing labour market challenges which require the use of more costly temporary solutions; supply chain issues continue which require more costly alternative or expedited arrangements. This will be further exacerbated over the medium term by a weak growth forecast in the UK economy impacting on public sector spending, the destabilising effects on the UK economy of trade tariff imposed by the USA, and by heightened interest rates that will impact housing costs. All the aforementioned results in a growing need for supportive Council services, a reduced demand for income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a continued high-cost operating environment.

Current modelling predicts a continuously increasing budget deficit, despite a higher than expected increase in Welsh Government funding, with a projected cumulative shortfall of £34.7m by 2028/29. The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget and therefore any budget shortfalls will need to be met through a combination of pressures being mitigated, additional savings and income or reserve contributions. This will be particularly challenging set against the backdrop of an ambitious Corporate and Community Plan being implemented.

A continuation of challenges seen during the pandemic has meant that an increasing number of our schools are experiencing budget deficits. At 2022/23 year end, just 5 schools were in deficit; this increased to 16 by year-end 2023/24. This is projected to increase to 24 by year-end 2024/25, almost 70% of schools.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	High (12)
2026/27	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	
2027/28	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Ensure that services deliver within budget, deliver savings targets and continue to identify, review and challenge pressures			Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources		A 24/25 revenue budget update presented to Cabinet in February notes an overall revenue budget deficit forecast of £1,593,000, a significant improvement of £2,760,000 since the previous update. This update also forecasts a 78.3% delivery rate of the £10,940,000 budgeted service savings required for the year. This results in a shortfall in savings of £2,376,000 that is included in the overall deficit.					
			Ongoing		The ongoing financial position of the Social Care & Health directorate remains the key risk. The level and complexity of demand for both Adult’s and Children’s care continues to trend upwards and is outstripping the progress being made in the preventative agenda and through placement and practice change. The ongoing programme of reviewing existing adults care provision remains challenging due to pressures in managing new referrals and assessments. Given the significance of the adverse Social Care & Health budget position, and the impact this has on the Council’s overall financial position, it is essential that this service maintains financial discipline and mitigates further cost wherever possible.					
					Despite the overall improvement in the budget deficit, there remains a significant challenge to close out the remaining deficit. It therefore remains essential that all services continue to engage in mitigation measures, including: maximising all grant income opportunities; vacancy management; bearing down on all non-essential expenditure; service reduction and efficiency.					
Develop a set of budget proposals for 2025/26			Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources		Final budget proposals were presented to Council in March 2025. These came following a consultation process which included over 650 people across 15 stakeholder sessions. Final proposals also take into account the final settlement received from Welsh Government, which introduced a 3.8% funding floor for all local authorities, of which Monmouthshire will benefit. Though budget proposals for 2025/26 have been agreed, many risks remain to be assessed and managed within the year. These include: high demand for council services; deliverability of budget saving proposals; pay awards; and employer’s national insurance contributions. Given the high number of remaining risks, the strengthened financial governance arrangements will continue through 2025/26 to provide assurance that robust arrangements are in place to respond to any circumstances where further budget pressures might require additional mitigation or savings to be brought forward.					
Strengthen medium to long term strategic financial planning as part of the Medium-term financial plan, that is based on realistic evidence and planned scenarios, to guide our budget setting in line with agreed strategic objectives and responsiveness to challenges, such as the cost-of-living			Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources		The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was approved by Council in July 2024. This strategy provides the strategic framework for the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and a set of key principles to guide medium term financial planning. These two together form the link between the council’s long-term policy objectives and its financial capacity. As part of the development of the strategy, a delivery plan has been established, which sets out clear timescales for completion; this is monitored regularly by Cabinet and Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee as part of six-monthly MTFP updates.					
			Ongoing		The authority’s budget modelling assumptions are reviewed and updated regularly. Work continues to shape the wider programme of service change that will include an ongoing assessment of key service pressures, the risks and modelling assumptions that sit alongside this, with the aim to establish a clear plan and approach to address the medium-term budget shortfalls forecast. The next iteration of the Medium term financial plan will be considered early in 2025/26 and post the UK Government Spring budget.					

Continue to work closely with schools to ensure their financial plans are as robust as possible to minimise any impact, whilst continuing to improve standards for our young people	Finance Manager – Children & Young People Ongoing	<p>The overall level of school reserves is forecast to move further into deficit by £5,240,000 by the end of the 2024/25 financial year, to a collective deficit balance of £6,144,000, with twenty-four (69%) of thirty-five schools forecast to be in a deficit balance. Those schools forecasting to end the 2024/25 financial year in deficit balance have brought forward recovery plans that are being considered by officers and Cabinet. The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision.</p> <p>It is clear from these budget recovery plans that it will take schools a considerable amount of time to fully recover deficit balances, and that in addition to the £1m further investment in schools within the 2025/26 budget, the Council will need to take assessment of this financial risk within medium term financial planning. Schools will continue to be supported to strengthen their financial planning.</p>
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Ref & Status	3	Risk	Potential Risk that: The authority is unable to maintain key infrastructure and meet other identified pressures due to insufficient capital funding availability							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Peter Davies (Deputy Chief Executive) and Cllr Ben Callard (Cabinet Member for Resources)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Service Delivery Cautious	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Treat	
Reason why Identified										
Underlying the Capital Strategy is the recognition that the financial resources available to meet council priorities are constrained by the level of one-off reserves and capital receipts that the Council holds and the level of capital grant funding from Welsh Government and other funding bodies, and the extent to which the Council is able to entertain further prudential borrowing. The core capital programme has been impacted in recent years in order to enable the Band A new schools programme to be funded, which has now successfully concluded. Subsequent to a Council decision having been secured the 3-19 school in Abergavenny has progressed into contract and is in its construction phase, supported under the Welsh Government Band B programme.										
There remain a considerable number of pressures that sit outside any potential to fund them within the Capital MTFP, and this has significant risk associated with it. These include property and highways infrastructure, DDA work, and public rights of way. In addition to this, there are various schemes/proposals (e.g. Monlife, tranche C Future schools, climate emergency response, any enhanced DFG spending etc.) that could also have a capital consequence, but in advance of quantifying those or having Member consideration of these items, they are also excluded from current capital MTFP. In the event of emergency pressures, resources will have to be diverted. Projects, such as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, also require significant capital investment to realise the outcomes.										
The timing of capital receipts always remains uncertain due to market conditions. Future investment in capital schemes is in part dependent on future success of achieving capital receipts and there are risks attached to some receipts materialising. There is a risk associated with relying on the use of capital receipts in the same year that they come into the council and the potential for this to have significant revenue pressures should receipts be delayed and temporary borrowing be required. Significant further capital receipts are now not forecast and until such time as the outcome of the Replacement Local Development Plan is known and for which the Council has put forward a number of strategic sites in its ownership.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	
2026/27	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	
2027/28	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	High (12)
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Regularly review assumptions as part of the capital MTFP taking account of any new information that is relevant and the consequential impact on the revenue MTFP			Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources Ongoing		The Capital MTFP was updated as part of the development of the Capital Strategy. The capital MTFP and capital strategy seek to work towards a financially sustainable core capital programme, whilst balancing the need to deliver capital investment plans in line with policy commitment and need. The current capital MTFP does not cover all the capital budget pressures that have been identified. This shows that there is more demand for capital spending than the Council considers it can reasonably afford. This means that capital schemes will have to be ranked or the capital available has to be divided more widely than is ideal. The capital programme includes yearly investment for property maintenance, highways maintenance, relevant specific capital grants and the future schools programme. This will help to deal with the most urgent backlog issues, focussing on worst condition first and related risk. However, estate rationalisation programs, closure/disposal of assets, asset transfers and other capital projects to refurbish or replace operational properties will also be used to reduce the backlog funding needed. This will not solve the specific total backlog but is a way of targeting the main issues in a reasonable way.					

		<p>The value of Capital receipts forecast after 2025/26 drops off quite considerably which is reflective of the replacement local development plan (RDLP) not proceeding as quickly as envisaged in the original delivery agreement. This will have an impact on the balance of receipts available to fund future capital investment demands in the near term.</p> <p>The Council has strengthened its scrutiny and challenge of the Capital Programme through the establishment of Capital and Asset Management working groups. The respective working groups look to ensure that projects are prudent, affordable and will deliver tangible benefits to core policy objectives over the long term.</p>
Review and refresh the council's Capital Strategy	Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources March 2025	The 2025/26 Capital Strategy was approved by Council in March 2025. The strategy sets out the longer-term context in which capital investment decisions are made and demonstrates that the Authority takes capital investment decisions that are in line with its Corporate priorities, and gives consideration to both risk, reward and impact.
Continue to monitor the Capital budget	Deputy CEX/Chief Officer, Resources Ongoing	<p>The latest 2024/25 budget update forecast a capital budget underspend of £243,000, alongside an indication of slippage in capital schemes of £13,199,000. The large number of schemes requiring slippage may point to more underlying issues in project planning, unrealistic profiling of budgets, and a lack of resourcing to manage the volume of schemes being planned. Finance teams will need to continue to work with budget holders to assess if any further amendment to project delivery plans are required given the impact that capital expenditure progress can have on the profiling of capital financing costs.</p> <p>Capital receipts are projected to be in surplus for the medium-term. Whilst the current balance is healthy, there remains a need for caution over committing any further receipts to either capital investment or increasing the level of capitalisation direction given the level of currently unbanked receipts contained within the forward projections.</p>
Further refinement of priority assessments in the property and infrastructure budgets to ensure all pressures have been considered and ranked.	Head of Landlord Services Ongoing	<p>A regular programme of property condition surveys is underway, supported by routine compliance checks for all assets. This information as well as technical input from MCC's Landlord Services team, will continue to be used to inform prioritisation of planned capital maintenance spend. Independent condition assessments of key highways infrastructure are completed as required depending on condition. These inform prioritisation of available capital budget.</p> <p>A review of the pressures and associated risks is being undertaken to inform the capital budget process. A previous review in 20/21 had concluded that further feasibility studies and technical assessments needed to be undertaken on specific infrastructure assets, funded from existing highways infrastructure capital budgets. The results of these studies and assessments will inform the capital MTFP and pressures that will need to be accommodated and funded therein in future financial years. The Capital Working Groups and Asset Management Working Groups will contribute to decisions on the capital spend and MTFP.</p>
Deliver the Asset Management Plan to manage the Council's land and property portfolio	Head of Landlord Services Ongoing	The Asset Management Strategy has been adopted, introducing clearer alignment to the Community & Corporate Plan and establishing key principles which will inform strategic decision making for the council's land and property portfolio. The Asset Management Strategy is delivered via the associated Asset Management Plan, which is subject to regular monitoring and progress reporting. An annual review of the Asset Management Plan delivery will be presented to Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee in July as part of wider review of the enabling strategies.
Help sustain Council Services and enhance the asset base by investing in commercial property assets in order to increase the net rental income stream for the Council in line with the Asset Management Strategy	Head of Landlord Services Ongoing	<p>The Asset Management Strategy commits to maximising and commercialising assets wherever possible, including achieving income generation or revenue enhancement where opportunities are identified to do so. The core principle is achieved with acknowledgement of the council's policy objectives and ambition to achieve both financial and social returns.</p> <p>The performance of the council's commercial and investment portfolios are reported to Performance & Overview committee on six monthly cycles. The updates provided include an acknowledgement of the performance of the assets, their capital value and risk, market information and transaction updates. Officers provided recommendations and updates in accordance with the revised financial performance terms, as outlined in the Asset Management Strategy.</p>

Ref & Status	4	Risk	Potential Risk that: Difficulty recruiting for some posts that require specific skills or qualifications and continued wage inflation will impact the organisation's retention and workforce planning which may affect the delivery of Council services					
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible	Matthew Gatehouse (Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships) and Cllr Ben Callard (Cabinet Member for Resources)		Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Service delivery, Governance Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat

Reason why Identified

There is a global skills shortage, and the impact is being felt in several sectors that Monmouthshire County Council is either a part of or competes with for talent. Some services have identified challenges with recruitment; Social Care, Operations and Facilities are all facing difficulties, which is affecting service provision.

There is a continuing risk that staff well-being could be in impacted by a range of factors from work related pressures, such as: staff in some areas facing considerably increased workloads to meet increasing demand and personal home-based factors such as financial strains due to the increased cost of living.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Medium (6)
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Recruit and retain staff more effectively			Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships Ongoing		Recruitment issues are being reflected nationally within some sectors, and the council is not exempt from this. Positions within Social Care, Operations and Facilities, for example, have seen reductions in applicants, and this is impacting on service provision. Solutions for the national recruitment issues do not sit solely with local authorities.					
					The People Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2024 and contains a specific objective, and actions, aimed at improving recruitment and retention. An e-recruitment system is being implemented to support the development of recruitment as a genuine talent acquisition process. This will benefit recruiting managers who want speed, simplicity and agility. The HR team are also utilising different social media channels to reach applicants.					
					A new work experience and apprentices’ policy has been developed and will seek to increase the number of apprentice positions, creating a new pipeline of talent. People Leaders Workshops are supporting the sharing of information with service areas and promote networking and sharing ideas.					
					HR staff sit on various local government groups and are collaborating with partner organisations to identify commonalities and information sharing. This is being fed into Welsh Government to inform their decision-making and to influence their response to the issue.					
Develop the support mechanisms to support staff wellbeing			Head of Organisation Workforce Development Ongoing		Staff well-being is affected by a range of factors, including additional work pressure and demand, personal factors and societal factors.					
					Supporting the health and well-being of our colleagues is a key objective of the People Strategy. The use of networks and communication digitally, surveys and feedback loops to senior managers, has extended the reach of contact with the workforce. This has also created the conditions for a wider system of self-supportive networks sharing practice, ideas and support.					
					An audit has been undertaken of our wellbeing offer and location of access allowing for consolidation and ease of access for all colleagues. We are exploring the opportunity to work with CASE UK funded by Welsh Government to provide physiotherapy, psychological and occupational therapy. We are also assessing options for providing support and guidance to colleagues in relation to financial wellbeing.					
					The Digital ‘Cwtch’ continues, although less frequently. The people services team has developed a People Leaders Support Site which enables ‘live’ discussion/news feed, enabling direct support and a shared learning platform for managers and head-teachers. Colleague Conferences have also recently been held to bring staff together and allow colleagues to engage in meaningful discussions that will help us find innovative solutions to improve our operations and better serve our communities.					
Embed workforce planning to ensure the right skills, expertise and knowledge are available for future changes			Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships Ongoing		The new People Strategy has created a clear commitment to embed workforce planning across the organisation. This is aimed at addressing shortages and ensure career pathways are in place. New arrangements within the HR team will ensure that HR business partners can continue to play an active role in strategic discussions at Directorate Management Teams to ensure effective workforce planning.					
					The People Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2024 and contains a clear commitment to ensuring we can retain the best people. Action includes promoting career development opportunities to ensure that we keep talent in local government. A new work					

		<p>experience and apprentice policy has been developed to create a new pipeline of people being recruited and trained to supply the workforce of the future.</p> <p>The development and retention of existing staff is an essential component of workforce planning. A learning management system (Thinqi) has now been rolled out to all staff; this provides a centralised training and development area for officers, and includes a host of learning resources for staff as well as the opportunity to book face to face and digital/online training.</p>
Adopt a qualitative approach to ensuring professional development, wellbeing and information flow is taking place for those that want or need it	Head of Organisation Workforce Development Ongoing	<p>The colleague appraisal scheme has been redesigned to allow all colleagues to engage in performance discussions with their line manager. This process facilitates both a training needs and skills analysis.</p> <p>A Leader/Manager Developmental Pathway is being created. This pathway will comprise of a number of modules including meaningful staff/line manager engagement and communication. Colleagues need to be given the ‘right’ to seek meaningful 1-1s on a regular basis, and there needs to be a focus on improving the skills of line managers to enable a variety of different approaches to the process so that performance development is realistically achieved.</p> <p>The Colleague Survey provides feedback loops to ensure colleagues requirements are being met.</p>

Ref & Status	5	Risk	Potential Risk that: Loss or corruption of data due to cyber-attack or data mismanagement, which will compromise the delivery of essential council services											
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Sian Hayward (Head of Information, Technology & Security) and Cllr Ben Callard (Cabinet Member for Resources)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee		All Governance and Audit Committee		Risk category and appetite level		Information Governance, Service delivery Averse		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Tolerate	
Reason why Identified														
There have been a number of high-profile cases across both public and private organisations where cyber-attacks and data breaches have compromised service delivery and financial loss. These attacks occur due to insecure infrastructure or staff who are not cyber literate and may inadvertently introduce attacks through their personal actions. Cyber security can also be compromised through a lack of structured governance arrangements, risk assessments and planning.														
Digital working has increased in recent years bringing an increase in the potential for loss of data through cyber incidents.														
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score				
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score					
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Medium (8)				
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
Mitigating Actions														
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress									
Ensure robust arrangements are in place to safeguard the organisation’s data and systems from cyber-attack			Cyber security service Ongoing		The Council recognises that total elimination of cyber-attack is not possible, but we will ensure robust arrangements are in place to safeguard data and systems from cyber-attack via: Physical barriers to the network, staff awareness, training and culture and structured governance, risk analysis and business continuity planning. Significant investments in ICT infrastructure and software have been undertaken, which will mitigate against the likelihood of a cyber-attack. An operational risk register, which is exempt from publication under the Data Protection Act, is maintained by the Information Security Team, the SRS Security Team and MCC. A cyber security report was taken to Governance and Audit Committee in February 2024 to provide assurance to the committee that the arrangements in place are robust.									

Risks to service delivery

Ref & Status	6	Risk	Potential Risk that: Significant harm to a child or adult may occur due to a specific failure of safeguarding arrangements											
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Jane Rodgers (Strategic Director Social Care and Health) & Will Mclean (Strategic Director Learning, Skills and Economy) and Cllr Ian Chandler (Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee		A Connected Place Where People Care People Scrutiny Committee		Risk category and appetite level		Safeguarding Averse		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Tolerate	
Reason why Identified														
The Council and its partners must maintain a consistent focus on safeguarding vulnerable people in order to both prevent and reduce the likelihood of harm, and to respond effectively to reduce risks if harm occurs.														
The social care system is facing increased pressures with more complex presentations and increased vulnerability within communities. This demand pressure, alongside ongoing resource and workforce challenges, impacts on the council’s ability to protect children and adults who are at risk.														
Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) continue to inspect and conduct assurance checks of our services. Recommended areas of improvement from reviews have been recognised by the council and inspection action plans developed.														
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score				
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score					
2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Medium (8)				
2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8					
Mitigating Actions														
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress									
Continually monitor and evaluate safeguarding processes and practice and ensure good accountability for safeguarding. Ensure that where actions are identified from self-evaluation processes that these are implemented.			Safeguarding & quality assurance service manager Ongoing, Annual Evaluation – September 2025		Progress against the council’s safeguarding priorities is evaluated annually and the priorities reflect the cornerstones for keeping people safe in Monmouthshire, as set out in the Corporate Safeguarding Policy. The most recent Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report was presented to Council in October 2024. The report evaluates the progress of the Council’s key safeguarding priorities during 2023/24, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2024/25. The report evaluates the cornerstones of safeguarding in Monmouthshire - 3 areas of safeguarding arrangements are assessed as Level 5 Very Good– and 2 areas as Level 4 – Good. This evaluation report forms an integral part of the improvement of safeguarding practice across the Council and drives the work of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group.									
Drive the strategic agenda and the associated programme of activities for safeguarding through the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG).			Chief Officer, Social Care, Health & Safeguarding Ongoing, Annual Evaluation – September 2025		The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] has continued to meet bi-monthly on a digital platform. The group ensures that corporate Safeguarding has oversight at a senior level, with membership from each directorate lead. These meetings identify safeguarding concerns and themes; share knowledge around safeguarding issues and, where required, promote a strategic and coordinated approach. A Core Data set has been agreed by WASG. Moving forward, this should provide increased opportunity to inform WASG members of safeguarding performance at a whole authority level. Despite resource pressures across directorates and capacity issues within the Safeguarding Unit, safeguarding has remained a priority for the Council with key strengths within directorates and across council relationships. The SAFE (Safeguarding Assessment Framework for Evaluation) process has continued to roll out across directorates and reviews have taken place in a timely manner. The Safeguarding Unit continues to be available to offer support and advice as well as being the conduit for new and developing safeguarding policy and guidance from the Regional Safeguarding Board. Issues raised within the previous SAFE assessment led to the strengthening of support in the safe recruitment process, specifically in risk management following DBS certifications.									
As a statutory partner of the regional safeguarding boards, continue to work with other statutory partners to ensure that there are effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, that			Chief Officer, Social Care, Health & Safeguarding Ongoing, Annual evaluation – September 2025		There continues to be full representation at all levels of the work of the regional safeguarding board. There is strong engagement in regional approaches to addressing the risks of sexual and criminal exploitation of children; Modern Day Slavery; Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse; Sexual Violence (VAWDASV); and Contest (PREVENT anti radicalisation).									

they are working well, share learning and implement any recommendations.		<p>The priorities set in in the regional board’s annual plan are reflected in the priority work of the Council’s Safeguarding Unit. The Whole Authority Safeguarding Group continues to receive, review, and implement developments in safeguarding flowing from regional and national policy. The Council’s safeguarding unit supports quarterly safeguarding learning networks to share learning and developments in safeguarding across agencies.</p> <p>The Council is represented in numerous operational multi-agencies safeguarding forums, including The Monmouthshire Exploitation Group (MEG).</p>
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Ref & Status	7	Risk	Potential Risk that: Risk of harm if we are unable to meet the care and support needs of some vulnerable children due to an increase in demand and complexity of cases											
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Jane Rodgers (Strategic Director Social Care and Health) and Cllr Ian Chandler (Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee		A Connected Place Where People Care People Scrutiny Committee		Risk category and appetite level		Safeguarding Averse		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Treat	
Reason why Identified														
The number of contacts into the ‘front-door’ of children’s services has increased in recent years and remains high. The council is supporting 190 children who are looked after (March 2025). The number has stabilised in recent years, although it remains higher than the average number of children who are looked after across Wales. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) being looked after by the local authority is currently 14.														
The 2024/25 budget for Children’s Services is forecast to overspend by £2.5 million at February 2025. This is mainly as a result of increased demand for very high-cost placements for children who are looked after. The workforce position within children’s services also remains challenging, with reliance on agency workers and short-term grant funded posts, which can affect continuity of social work relationships for children.														
There is an insufficiency of placements for children who are looked after at a local, regional and national level, particularly those with complex needs or disabilities. Because of this, there is a risk that we may need to place children in unregistered provision in emergency situations. There is considerable instability within the placement provider market, against the backdrop of the Welsh Government’s policy commitment to eliminate profit from the care of looked after children. This creates an on-going risk for the council that is difficult to fully mitigate at present.														
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score				
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score					
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	Medium (8)				
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12					
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12					
Mitigating Actions														
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress									
Continue to strengthen the preventative offer to support children living safely at home, with their families and communities, and continue to review and monitor the Children Looked after population in line with Welsh Government expectations around reduction			Head of Children’s services Ongoing		The council is supporting 190 children who are looked after (March 2025). The number has stabilised in recent years, although it remains higher than the average number of children who are looked after across Wales. In recent years, the number of contacts into the ‘front-door’ of children’s services has increased and remains high. The focus is on keeping children safe, which can mean there has been less time for strength-based engagement with parents and children. An analysis of referral activity is helping us to consider the best way of intervening. There is a coherent approach to early help and prevention to support families. This allows families to receive support at the right level of intensity to enable parents to provide their children with the safety, nurture and care they need. Services are in place to support the rehabilitation of children following periods of being looked after e.g. Families Re-connect; to provide medium-term holistic support to families making sustainable change e.g. Achieving Change Together Team; and to provide a therapeutic response to parents and carers in supporting children with trauma presentations e.g. MyST. Family support has been further strengthened to provide intensive community supervision and support to children. The focus remains on practice development and working with families to support strengths, manage risks and achieve good outcomes, reducing the need for children to be looked. An additional focus is to increase resilience within Child Protection services to work with increased levels of risk and vulnerability within the community.									

Develop and expand the Children’s Services Commissioning Strategy in response to the intention to eliminate profit from children’s social care	Head of Children’s services Ongoing	<p>A commissioning and placement strategy has been developed, with a specific emphasis on the development of in-county residential and support living accommodation. This is aligned with Welsh Government’s ambition to eliminate profit from children’s care. One supported accommodation property has opened in Caldicot for up to 5 young people (16+), and one children’s home in Monmouth is currently under development, with a target of June 2025 to complete refurbishment. A further two properties, one children’s home and one 16+ supported accommodation, are also planned to be developed, with completion targets of December 2025 and January 2026, respectively. Two therapeutic children’s homes continue to operate, with expansion opportunities being explored.</p> <p>Children’s services continue to search for appropriate properties for one further children’s residential home, particularly in the North of the county, however this has proven challenging due to factors such as cost, registration requirements and community facilities. The service area continues to review the demand of placements against the work undertaken by the service in line with their Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy and Placement Commissioning Strategy. Children Services continue to plan for each child and a “horizon” list is kept to identify children who may need, at some point, to be accommodated. Predicting demand, however, remains a challenging and dynamic process, complicated by uncertainty within the care market nationwide.</p>
Continue to implement the fostering strategy on the recruitment, retention and skills development of in house fostering.	Head of Children’s Services Ongoing	The recruitment and retention of foster carers remains an area of significant challenge. There is an insufficiency of in-house carers in Monmouthshire, particularly carers who are able to provide more specialist care or look after sibling groups. Over recent years progress in increasing the number of in-house foster carers has stalled despite considerable effort and attention. This creates an over-reliance on private and independent providers, where the right placement for a child cannot be assured. In March 2025 a decision was passed to improve the offer to Monmouthshire foster carers, including increasing the allowance paid, to ensure foster carers are supported.

Ref & Status	8	Risk	Potential Risk that: Risk of harm if we are unable to meet the care and support needs of some vulnerable adults due to high demand and complexity of cases							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible	Jane Rodgers (Strategic Director Social Care and Health) and Cllr Ian Chandler (Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services)		Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	A Connected Place Where People Care	Risk category and appetite level	Safeguarding	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat		
				People Scrutiny Committee		Averse				
Reason why Identified										
The longer-term impact of the pandemic, together with the aging demographic has increased the complexity of referrals into Adult Services. As a result, services are under considerable pressure, particularly given the added challenges of the Council’s financial situation and the pressures within partner agencies, particularly health. There are waiting lists in place for social care assessments and some people are having to wait for services they need, including for reablement, care at home and mental capacity act assessments. There has also been an increase in the number of residential care placements due to the complexity of people’s needs.										
The availability of workforce in some key posts remains a risk - specifically mental health practitioners, direct carers and therapies. There is insufficient capacity within the current core workforce structure to meet the demand pressures, particularly at times of peak demand associated with hospital discharge (for example). The current financial context for both health and social care places restrictions on the ways in which services can respond to need. In 2024/25 the Adult Services budget is forecasting an overspend of just over £2 million at February 2025, with pressures due to increases in external residential care home placements and increased demand for care at home.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	Medium (8)
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Work with Welsh Government to recruit and retain care staff			Chief Officer, Social Care & Health Ongoing		Ensuring that there is a sufficient workforce has been a risk for some time, particularly in key posts around direct care, mental health, team leader posts and occupational therapy. The perceptions of working in social care tend to be negative; recruitment is focussed on counteracting these negative perceptions and demonstrate the opportunities, career progression, work life balance and job satisfaction that people experience who work within the sector. Generally, the workforce in Adults social care remains stable, however attraction					

		and recruitment of people into the social care sector, particularly in some roles, continues to be a challenge. Workforce planning remains a priority within the service to ensure that scarce resources are utilised in the best way possible.
Work to address the difficulties in the health and social care system through the Regional Partnership Board and its sub-groups.	Chief Officer, Social Care & Health and Head of Adult Services Ongoing	There are on- going regional and local partnership meetings to identify and address difficulties across health and social care. These include Gwent Adult Service Partnership, and at a local level the Integrated Services Partnership Board. At a local and regional level, grant money received via the Regional Partnership Board is used to best effect to meet population needs and respond to demand pressure in particular within hospital discharge; supporting people with frailty to remain well at home, and ensuring the development of effective early help and preventative services via the Integrated Wellbeing Network. Establishing targeted early help and ensuring there are good pathways between social care and community based wellbeing support is central to trying to mitigate demand pressures over time.
Rebalance reablement and long-term care within our in-house care at home service.	Chief Officer, Social Care & Health Ongoing	There is increased capacity to provide reablement service to those who would benefit from it. While this is good progress the aim is to improve this further. In line with the aims of the commissioning strategy the focus is on further increasing the availability of in-house home care to support reablement as opposed to providing long term care, and to increase the number of people accessing the opportunities that reablement provides. Over time this should help to mitigate demand pressures.
Monitor requests for services to ensure demand is being met and delays are minimised	Chief Officer, Social Care & Health Ongoing	On-going pressure across the social care and health system, together with workforce shortages in some areas, has meant that there are continued challenges in being able to respond to people’s care and support needs as timely as we would want. All referrals are triaged at point of referral to ensure that those in most need are prioritised for assessment and intervention. Case reviews are being undertaken, applying the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act to ensure a strengths-based approach looking at individual, family and community based support where appropriate. Access to care and support is not always timely; however, overall there is increased capacity across home care which has assisted in supporting 96% of demand in the last year. Action is being undertaken to ensure that home care runs, both in-house and provider services, are coordinated as efficiently as possible. The commissioning strategy is being implemented to strengthen locality based provision of home care and increase capacity into rural areas.
Implement a ‘place-based’ approach to create sustainability in care at home services	Chief Officer, Social Care & Health – As per commissioning strategy	The Council remains committed to developing a more sustainable care at home sector for the future. A comprehensive strategy for commissioning homecare through increased block purchasing has been developed. The first procurement exercise under the new strategy has commenced in the south of the county. The micro-care project within Monmouthshire continues to support the self-employed carers to develop their businesses. This is increasing care and support capacity across the county and allowing people increased choice and control over how they receive support.
Ensure the long-term sustainability of social care providers	Chief Officer, Social Care & Health & Head of Public Protection Ongoing	It is vital that social care providers are able to provide care and support and as such the council has a role in ensuring their financial sustainability through fair fee negotiations and supporting with recruitment and training. The Council has built positive relationships with local providers and intervenes and provide support where difficulties emerge. There is effective contract monitoring in place, based on partnership approaches. The position in Monmouthshire, whilst challenging, has seen very few providers withdraw their services and most have managed to weather the difficulties around recruitment and retention with the social care sector. Positively home care services have increased and there has been a reduction in the number of people waiting and the average length of wait time. The increasing numbers of residential placements and costs of residential care has had a big impact the budget in Adult Social Care. The main pressure on the budget during 2024/25 was down to provider fees. At the beginning of the year the cost of the care that commissioned was calculated at a higher rate than was able to be accommodated within the budget set. Through extensive fair fee negotiations with provider agencies this was reduced; however, not to the extent that this delivered within the financial envelope agreed within the budget.

Ref & Status	9a	Risk	Potential Risk that: Failure to return attendance figures to those seen before the pandemic, particularly among vulnerable pupils and those eligible for free school meals, could lead to a worsening in educational attainment					
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Will Mclean (Strategic Director Learning, Skills and Economy) and Cllr Laura Wright (Cabinet member for Education)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All People Scrutiny Committee, Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Strategic Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat

Reason why Identified

The pandemic caused widespread disruption to learning, with a significant effect on both teachers and learners. Longer-term effects of the pandemic on pupil well-being and attendance have emerged. There is a risk that our schooling system struggles to adjust to the new patterns of need amongst our children and young people in the post-pandemic period. Meeting the needs of vulnerable learners remains a priority and the gap in attainment between those not eligible and those eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) remains a concern. There is variation in eFSM learner progress and outcomes across schools. Leadership, management, capacity and performance has been identified as in need of improvement in some schools.

Attendance levels have been particularly affected. Though attendance at a primary level has returned to pre-pandemic levels, attendance in our secondary schools remains below levels seen before the pandemic and an area for concern. Attendance of those eligible for free schools meals remains below pre-pandemic levels and below those of their peers not eligible for free school meals. The low attendance of those eFSM has been identified by Estyn as an area for concern in one of our secondary schools. We need to increase attendance for those eFSM to ensure no pupil is left behind.

Ensuring pupils return to school, and understanding the barriers to prevent them doing so, will be key to ensuring our learners are achieving their potential.

Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Medium (8)
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Implement the new Attendance and Engagement Policy and processes			Head of Attainment Ongoing		The Local Authority Attendance and Engagement Policy has been updated to encompass all aspects of the Engaging, Belonging and Participating guidance issued by Welsh Government in October 2023. This has now been rolled out to all schools. Alongside the policy, the team have created a handbook for schools to summarise the roles and responsibilities in the new policy, the graduated response for attendance, model policy and the local code for fixed penalty notices and prosecutions. The Education Welfare Service have also prepared training for governors as they implement the new policy.					
Work with Education Welfare Services to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and are able to access excellent teaching and learning			Head of Attainment Ongoing		The Education Welfare Service (EWS) team continue to work collaboratively with external supporting services to provide a holistic approach to supporting families to overcome barriers to school attendance. This year, EWS has reviewed processes for closing cases where attendance has improved, there has been a change in provision, or a pupil has relocated to another area. As a result, 50 cases were closed during the year, which has released additional time for Education Welfare Officers to focus on the increasing number of complex cases involving a wide range of agencies.					
Work with schools and partners to better understand drivers of low attendance			Head of Inclusion Ongoing		The team have developed their awareness of drivers of low school attendance through engagement in programmes such as Community Focused Schools (which focuses on the way in which families work with schools), Trauma Informed Schools and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) approaches. This means that the team consistently reinforce the expectations and approaches used in other teams within the directorate. EWS are also working closely with the Inspire Outreach Team who offer support to secondary pupils with attendance below 50% through a reintegration and qualification approach for pupils who may be dis-engaged or have reasons for non-attendance such as Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). For the first time a team of Family Liaison Officers has been working with schools and families to build relationships, overcome barriers to attendance and support pupils back into school. This means pupils and families are receiving support earlier, and Education Welfare Officers have more time to deal with increasing numbers of complex cases and support schools to review systems and processes to secure high levels of attendance for all pupils. However, during the year, the capacity of the service has been reduced for periods.					
Support pupils’ wellbeing and address barriers to learning			Head of Inclusion Ongoing		The whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being has been implemented. Which helps schools to understand how they are best placed to promote well-being. This has been introduced in a phased approach and increased the number of schools engaged in the approach from 43% to 74%. This is increasing the support available for the well-being needs of pupils and has a significant effect on children’s attendance and achievement in school. All schools and settings are engaged with Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), and there are currently 67 practicing ELSAs who access regular supervision, operating across all but one school in the county, making a positive impact on the emotional literacy of pupils. Schools are also engaged in professional learning related to Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA); Trauma Informed Approaches; and Autism; currently 79% of schools are engaged.					

Ref & Status	9b	Risk	Potential Risk that: An increase in behaviours that challenge in schools which may lead to harm to a pupil or member of staff											
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Will Mclean (Strategic Director Learning, Skills and Economy) and Cllr Laura Wright (Cabinet member for Education)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee		All People Scrutiny Committee, Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee		Risk category and appetite level		Safeguarding, Health and Safety Averse		Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Treat	
Reason why Identified														
Monmouthshire is currently experiencing exceptionally high levels of both Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE) and Permanent Exclusions (PEx) and this presents a risk to the positive engagement and outcomes for children / young people and increasing pressure on local authority services and provisions.														
Permanent Exclusion (PEx) and Fixed Term exclusions (FTE) have both increased over the past year. Local authorities across Wales and England have experienced similar trends post covid. The reasons for this are complex and not easily resolved. As of the end of the 2023/24 academic year there were 22 upheld PEx. The number and rate of PEx and FTE is higher than the South East Wales consortia overall rate. Of concern is that the data shows clear rises in the issue of FTE for reasons linked to violent or aggressive behaviour, this can be verbal or physical against another student or an adult.														
Increased levels of exclusions increase the pressure on the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) which currently does not have the capacity to accept any new learners unless they have been permanently excluded. This means that even where a graduated response has been applied within a school, and where behaviours and risk assessments indicate the learner may merit a PRS intervention, there is limited capacity to access this.														
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score				
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score					
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	Medium (8)				
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12					
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12					
Mitigating Actions														
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress									
Support learners most at risk of repeat Fixed Term Exclusions or Permanent exclusions through the Education Support Team (EST)			Head of Inclusion Ongoing		The Education Support Team was created in March 2023 and has enabled those learners most at risk of repeat Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE) or of Permanent Exclusions (PEx) to receive support from specialist professionals. This team have experience in responding to behaviours of concern/ challenge, an enhanced understanding of social emotional and mental health needs and additional learning needs (ALN) in a way that is trauma informed and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) aware. This supportive team has enabled learners to maintain their current placement by reducing the risk of PEx by stabilising behaviours and thus reducing risk, they have supported learners to integrate into other schools via managed moves to prevent PEx and supported in year transfers of learners with prior FTE.									
Implement the outcomes of the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) review			Head of Inclusion Ongoing		The Pupil Referral Service has been reviewed. This has helped understand the current demand, while considering the future role and function of the PRS. The findings of this review will now be implemented including increasing the capacity of the PRS to provide preventative intervention for pupils at risk of PEx and enhanced support for learners to reintegrate into mainstream having had a period of support in the PRS.									
Work with officers in community partnerships to secure Home Office grant funding to support the reduction of violence in schools			Vulnerable Learners Lead Ongoing		The Vulnerable Learner Lead worked with officers in community partnerships to secure Home Office grant funding to support the reduction of violence in schools and to reduce exclusions (both FTE and PEx) associated with this. This funding enabled several learners at risk of PEx to avoid this outcome, including learners in their final year of school, who were able to complete their exams in school. Further multi agency work has also been undertaken to consider how to reduce FTE and PEx linked to aggression and violence amongst both pupils and towards staff. Focused efforts are underway to improve representation at multi agency meetings in schools and with focused consideration of learners who have been excluded for these reasons in the intervening periods between each meeting.									
Continue to roll out training for all staff in all school and settings (i.e. ACEs and Trauma Informed practice) to increase the understanding of the impact on learner behaviours, strategies and approaches to deescalate and ensure safety and wellbeing.			Head of Inclusion Ongoing		A key part of our approach to reducing exclusions is to improve an understanding of the drivers for children’s behaviours. Trauma Informed approaches form part of a universal, whole-school, preventative approach supporting school communities to become trauma informed and mentally healthy places for all. Being Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) aware and trauma-informed is recognised by the Welsh Government in guidance and reflects the evidence base that it is important to build relational practice to improve positive outcomes for all learners. Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) and relational practice approaches are being developed and embedded. A multi-agency TIS Steering Group, including colleagues from health and social care, has been established to achieve this, led by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), and a tiered training programme has been developed.									

Risks to policy priorities

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Ref & Status	10	Risk	Potential Risk that: The Council does not support the Replacement Local Development Plan, leading to delays in its adoption which restricts our ability to take forward key policy objective such as job creation, affordable housing development and the adoption of key policies to protect the environment and tackle climate change							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Craig O’Connor (Chief Officer Place) and Cllr Paul Griffiths (Cabinet member for Planning and Economic Development)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	A Thriving and Ambitious Place A Safe Place to Live Place Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Governance, Strategic Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Tolerate		
Reason why Identified										
The current Local Development Plan ran until 31st December 2021; it will remain the principal development plan for decision-making purposes until the adoption of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). This does not change the urgent need for the council to make timely progress on its RLDP and to adopt it as soon as realistically possible to address key issues and challenges, including rebalancing our demography and responding to the climate emergency, and to meet the future needs of the county. Factors contributing to the delays include challenge from Welsh Government, which resulted in the need for a new Preferred Strategy, high phosphate levels in the rivers Usk and Wye which resulted in restrictions on developments, and delays in agreeing appropriate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites.										
The Council is now proceeding with a new Preferred Strategy that responds to the Welsh Government objection and unresolved water quality constraint in the upper River Wye catchment. A revised Delivery Agreement has therefore been prepared which sets out an amended timetable for Plan preparation. The revised timetable shows that the adoption of the RLDP is anticipated in Summer 2025. This unavoidable delay will impact on the Council’s ability to address the identified issues and objectives until the RLDP is adopted and puts pressure on the deliverability of the housing and employment figures over the Plan period, with more reliance on delivery towards the end of the Plan.										
There are a range of issues and challenges the RLDP will need to address:										
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The delivery of affordable housing continues to be a concern. There are a significant number of households on the Councils waiting list, and there are limited remaining opportunities within the current LDP to deliver affordable homes because most strategic sites have been delivered and the remaining few cannot currently proceed due to phosphates.• There is a recognised lack of suitable employment land in the northern part of the County (Abergavenny and Monmouth in particular). Delays to the RLDP mean that new allocations to attract investors or retain growing businesses will not be available. There may be some scope for employment sites to come forward adjacent to settlement boundaries outside of the current LDP allocations but in parts of the county these are affected by phosphate restrictions.• The RLDP will identify areas with potential for renewable energy. A delay to the RLDP will have limited impact in this regard because renewable energy schemes such as solar farms can come forward for consideration via the existing LDP and under national planning policy.• There is a need to ensure the RLDP’s growth ambition is matched by infrastructure delivery, much of which is delivered by other bodies. This alignment is required to ensure sustainable development to support future economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	Medium (8)
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Prepare a replacement Local Development Plan to address the county’s issues/challenges, including in relation to the provision of housing (market and affordable) and employment opportunities, and to facilitate the identification and allocation of additional housing land and appropriate employment land, with associated infrastructure.			Chief Officer Place Spring 2026		The RLDP Preferred Strategy was endorsed by Council in October 2023. This has formed the basis of the Deposit Plan, which was endorsed by Council for a detailed public consultation in October 2024. The Deposit Plan sets the ambition for development within the county. This plan also addresses a number of key issues and align with the priorities of the organisation; it has allocated 50% affordable housing on each new development and is introducing enabling policies which will allow for further affordable housing developments to come forward. This includes facilitating more single person accommodation in the county which is currently extremely limited and is a factor contributing to homelessness. All homes developed under this plan will also be net zero carbon. Council will consider the results of the consultation in Summer 2025, following which the RLDP will be subject to public examination.					
Work with partner organisations to identify and implement solutions to phosphate pollution in the Rivers Usk and Wye			Chief Officer Place Ongoing		In May, Cabinet approved the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy. This includes an action plan on how we will work in partnership to improve the health of our rivers and oceans. Progress will be monitored regularly by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group. Over the last few years there has been significant work in this area and there is planned strategic phosphate mitigation work in the form of phosphate stripping being installed in Llanfoist (Abergavenny) and Monmouth to serve their settlements. This will enable appropriate development to be permitted within these settlement areas. There has also been a comprehensive review of the Environmental Permits of wastewater treatments across Monmouthshire and, where there is capacity, appropriate development					

		proposals will be permitted. The candidate sites proposed within the Deposit Plan will not have an adverse impact on water quality within the River Wye or Usk.
Ensure RLDP growth ambition is met by essential infrastructure	Chief Officer Place	Close working is being undertaken on the infrastructure requirements and the delivery between the Local Planning Authority and colleagues in the Local Education Authority, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Highways Authority, Passenger Transport Unit, Active Travel Team, SUDs Approval Body and Green Infrastructure team. The Infrastructure Plan will be published alongside the Deposit Plan.

Ref & Status	11a	Risk	Potential Risk that: The council is unable to deliver its commitment to decarbonise its operations in sufficient time to achieve net zero by 2030 because our resources are not commensurate with the scale and complexity of the challenge							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Debra Hill-Howells (Chief Officer Infrastructure) & Cllr Catrin Maby (Cabinet member for Climate Change and the Environment)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	A Green Place to Live Place Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Strategic Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate		Tolerate	
Reason why Identified										
Tackling climate change and moving to a low carbon economy is one of the biggest challenges facing our society. Rising temperatures and more extreme weather events bring increased risks to our communities and are causing long-term and potentially irreversible damage to our planet’s eco-systems, with significant local impacts such as flooding and loss of species. If we are to stand a chance of slowing the rise in the Earth’s temperature, we need to act now. In 2019, councillors were unanimous in declaring a climate emergency. The council will strive to reduce its own emissions and work with communities and local businesses to help them reduce their emissions. This will require engagement, community involvement and commitments from third parties.										
Despite a nation-wide climate emergency declaration and a common recognition of the importance of reducing carbon emissions, the resources provided to tackle this issue have consistently not met the scale of the challenge. A significant investment in public funding would be required if net zero 2030 is to be met.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2025/26	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	Medium (9)
2026/27	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2026/27	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	
2027/28	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	2027/28	Almost certain	Substantial	High	12	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Deliver the Monmouthshire County Council Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy			Strategic Leadership Team Timescales as per strategy		The Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy was approved by Cabinet in May 2024. This strategy is underpinned by four action plans to better reflect the breadth of work that is taking place: Internal decarbonisation, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Rivers and Oceans and Community climate change. Progress in implementing the strategy is regularly monitored by the Climate and Nature Emergency Steering Group. Work is underway as part of this strategy to better understand the scale of the challenge we face in striving to collectively become net zero. A costed decarbonisation plan and survey for our built estate has been commissioned to ensure a sound understanding of the funding needed to implement change. Without significant increases in public funding, it is unlikely we will meet the collective target of net zero by 2030. Support is being provide to communities to reduce their carbon emissions through circular economy projects such as Benthylg library of things and reuse shops. Grant funding has been obtained to employ two officers to help expand this offering. The Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) continues to share best practice and resources. This partnership developed the Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP); the public consultation of this action plan was launched in September. The action plan provides practical and achievable actions to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in the county. The council is a member of the Wye Nutrient Management Board Technical Advice Group which is identifying and analysing options for delivering improvements in water quality. The council also has continued involvement in the Wye Catchment Partnership to protect water quality, water quantity and biodiversity. An Usk Catchment Partnership Core Group has been established and has agreed its priorities for the draft Integrated Catchment Plan.					

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Ref & Status	11b	Risk	Potential Risk that: The Council is unable to deliver services as a result of the increasing frequency of climate-related emergencies such as floods or extreme heatwaves that increase the demand for emergency responses and can cause damage to infrastructure and the closure of facilities							
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible		Strategic Leadership Team & Cllr Catrin Maby (Cabinet member for Climate Change and the Environment)	Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	All Place Scrutiny Committee		Risk category and appetite level	Environmental. Service Delivery Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat	
Reason why Identified										
Tackling climate change and moving to a low carbon economy is one of the biggest challenges facing our society. Rising temperatures and more extreme weather events bring increased risks to our communities and are causing long-term and potentially irreversible damage to our planet’s eco-systems, with significant local impacts such as flooding and loss of species. If we are to stand a chance of slowing the rise in the Earth’s temperature, we need to act now. In 2019, councillors were unanimous in declaring a climate emergency. The council will strive to reduce its own emissions and work with communities and local businesses to help them reduce their emissions. This will require engagement, community involvement and commitments from third parties.										
When considering climate change, it is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, but also how resilient the county is to the likely impacts of climate change. Extreme weather, such as flooding and record high temperatures, can impact significantly on infrastructure, homes and businesses, along with disruption to community life and public services, particularly critical public services people rely on such as care services.										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	Medium (8)
2026/27	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	
2027/28	Almost certain	Major	High	16	2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Prepare and adapt for the impact of climate change			Strategic Leadership Team Ongoing		In recent years, council services have considered what the potential risks to their services are, in order to start thinking about how to adapt to these risks. In 2021, some services updated these Climate Change Risk Assessments to allow service areas to better understand their necessary adaptation requirements. Discussion are also taking place with Welsh Government to better understand their expectations around climate adaptation. The council is also part of broader assessments of climate risk being carried out by the Cardiff Capital Region as part of their Carbon Disclosure Project commitments. The Replacement Local Development Plan has a key role to play in making sure our communities are sustainable and resilient to the impacts of climate change. Changes to national planning policy on flooding are still awaited, but officers intend to take a precautionary approach, avoiding all built development on greenfield sites at known flood risk. Welsh Government has produced The National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales, and in response, Monmouthshire is currently developing an updated Flood Risk Management Strategy. Much of the work to coordinate emergency responses is organised through the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The council continues to work with partners on the LRF to make sure that we are prepared for severe weather events. As part the reworking of the Climate Emergency Strategy, climate adaptation, which includes preparing and adapting for the impact of climate change, has been embedded across each of the 4 action plans. Some of the actions within this include developing the management of green infrastructure to improve climate resilience; increasing urban tree canopy, including new street trees and in car parks to provide a cooling effect; and continuing to promote and support council services with business continuity and emergency response strategies.					

Ref & Status	12	Risk	Potential Risk that: Residents are unable to secure or retain suitable accommodation, leading to rising homelessness and outward migration as a result of failures in the housing market						
Risk Owner and cabinet Member responsible	Cath Fallon (Head of Rural Development, Housing and Partnerships), Matthew Gatehouse (Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships) & Cllr Sara		Strategic objective & Scrutiny Committee	A Safe Place to Live A Fair Place to Live People Scrutiny Committee	Risk category and appetite level	Service Delivery Minimalist	Terminate/treat/transfer/tolerate	Treat	

	Burch (Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism) and Cllr Angela Sandles (Cabinet member for Equalities and Engagement)									
Reason why Identified										
<p>The Council is currently experiencing significant challenges and risks in relation to homelessness. Initially due to the pandemic, Welsh Government required Councils to avoid people sleeping rough, then made the subsequent decision to transition homeless services with the aim of homelessness becoming rare, brief and unrepeatd, together with an improvement in the quality of homeless accommodation. Welsh Government homeless policy changes, initially through the Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Support and then subsequently more recently Rapid Rehousing Guidance, whilst positive, have created challenges largely relating to lack of accommodation and support needs. Although homeless presentations have remained broadly consistent, the impact of Welsh Government policy has seen a significant increase in demand for homeless accommodation. This in turn has impacted significantly on the Housing Options Team operationally in respect of the need to identify alternative accommodation, which largely has relied on B&B accommodation, re-housing households, housing management and placement break downs. This has also created placement and staffing challenges.</p> <p>There are challenges regarding the availability of temporary, supported and permanent accommodation, the type, quality and location of accommodation and the range of housing support available necessary to meet current and emerging homeless need. Further challenges are also being experienced in respect of acquiring existing accommodation and repurposing properties due to the buoyant market in Monmouthshire and constraints relating to funding eligibility and planning. There are also delays in the construction of new homes due to delays in implementing the RLDP.</p> <p>The Renting Homes Act, which came into force from 1 December 2022, has made significant changes to the way all landlords in Wales rent their properties. There is a risk this could impact on the private rented sector in the County and reduce the availability of rental properties, further decreasing housing availability and increasing accommodation challenges in the County, although the current anecdotal evidence suggests the impact has not been too disruptive to date.</p> <p>Whilst the Council has made positive progress with homeless delivery evidenced by reductions in homeless presentations and the need to provide homeless accommodation due to a more positive performance in respect of homeless prevention, identification of additional homeless accommodation and move-on to social housing, risks remain.</p> <p>Monmouthshire welcomed large numbers of refugees from Ukraine. Local residents have opened their homes and all these refugees will need alternative accommodation when these temporary arrangements come to an end. In addition, many of those who have come through the Welsh Government Super Sponsor Scheme have found jobs and settled locally. All local authorities also need to find accommodation for Afghans arriving in the UK under the Afghan Resettlement Programme. A shortage of suitable and affordable accommodation, along with the challenges associated with our rurality, will affect our ability to provide suitable long-term accommodation.</p> <p>The widening of asylum dispersal from 2022 could place further pressure on the housing market as the council plays its part in assisting the Home Office to find short term accommodation for asylum seekers in line with UK Government policy and our aspirations for Monmouthshire to become an accredited county of sanctuary.</p>										
Risk Level (Pre-mitigation)					Risk Level (Post-mitigation)					Target risk score
Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	Year	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Level	Risk Score	
2025/26	Likely	Major	High	12	2025/26	Possible	Major	Medium	8	Low (4)
2026/27	Likely	Major	High	12	2026/27	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
2027/28	Likely	Major	High	12	2027/28	Possible	Major	Medium	8	
Mitigating Actions										
Mitigating Action			Responsibility Holder & Timescale		Mitigation action progress					
Prevent homelessness through Rapid Rehousing			Head of Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Reform		The Rapid Re-Housing Transition plan was adopted by Cabinet in April 2023. This sets out the Council’s five-year plan to prevent homelessness, increase accommodation and focus support, and includes active buy-in from wider agencies involving homelessness, for example, the role of Health and Social Care is extremely important in homeless prevention and helping people (such as young people and those with mental health issues) maintain their existing accommodation.					
			As per Homeless Transition Plan		Rapid rehousing is facilitating increased resource into homeless prevention, for example through additional staffing and the availability of the Homeless Prevention Fund. The council is working with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Shared Benefit Service to support more people at risk of homelessness, granting awards to households to help tackle arrears/debt and households experiencing homelessness to enable them to remain in their current accommodation or access alternatives.					
					The Housing Support service has been remodelled to include dedicated substance misuse support, temporary accommodation support and re-settlement support. This also includes dedicated support for young people with higher need through the recent expansion of the Housing First scheme with Pobl and the introduction of MoYo – dedicated housing floating support for young people. These initiatives have contributed to the increase in the percentage of homeless applications who are successfully prevented from becoming homeless to 71%. There is collaboration across council services to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. A Corporate Parenting Panel is regularly held with a range of teams from across the organisation that coordinate and provide support to care leavers. Further					

		opportunity has arisen to refresh the current Housing Support Grant programme to increase effectiveness. There is a need to reduce the number of projects to improve contract monitoring and re-specify and re-package requirements to increase resilience, flexibility and increase the focus on quality. This is a priority to start in 2025.
Develop suitable accommodation for homeless people, including long-term housing for all those accommodated in temporary housing and specialist provision for those with additional needs	Head of Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Reform As per Homeless Transition Plan	<p>The RLDP was recently approved by Council for public consultation. Council will consider findings of this consultation in Summer 2025. The delivery of the RLDP will be key to increasing the availability of housing in the county; the plan has allocated 50% affordable housing on each site and is introducing enabling policies which will allow for further affordable housing developments to come forward. This includes facilitating more single person accommodation in the county which is currently extremely limited and is a factor contributing to homelessness</p> <p>The availability of both temporary and settled homes for homeless households is being increased through a range of means including partnerships with private landlords through Monmouthshire Lettings and more homes through new build developments and acquisitions. The Council has also started to acquire accommodation for temporary accommodation. We have worked with housing association partners to make additional general needs social housing available for homeless households; for 24/25 63% of general need social housing had been allocated to homeless households. There is a need to determine how much scope there is to allocate further social housing to homeless applicants without being overly detrimental to other housing need groups. The increased support for those at risk of homelessness, combined with the increase in availability of both temporary and settled accommodation, have contributed to the reduced use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation.</p> <p>As part of the focus to reduce the use of unsuitable and costly B & B, a key initiative has been to repurpose Severn View, a former residential home, to temporary homeless accommodation with dedicated support. This will help mitigate against the need to use B & B.</p> <p>The general homeless position is enabling a review of Monmouthshire Lettings during the summer of 2025, with a view to reducing the stock whilst also reconfiguring the portfolio in terms of quality, location and type.</p>
Prepare an RLDP to address the county's issues/challenges, including in relation to the provision of housing (market and affordable) and employment opportunities, and to facilitate the identification and allocation of additional housing land and appropriate employment land, with associated infrastructure.	Chief Officer Place Head of Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Reform Ongoing	Detailed update contained in risk 10.
Work with partners including Welsh Government, UK Government, local sponsors and landlords to identify a range of accommodation to accommodate Ukrainian refugees and those arriving from Afghanistan.	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships Ongoing	<p>The authority has been successful helping those fleeing the war in Ukraine to find properties in the area. Residents participating in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme have gone above and beyond what was initially asked of them. We have exceeded the 'population share' of refugees identified by Welsh Government.</p> <p>Recognising the challenges faced by this community, we have a specialised team comprising of two homeless prevention workers, complemented by dedicated translation and administration support. Our approach involves close collaboration with local landlords to cultivate strong local networks and access to properties, addressing concerns related to affordability and financial assessments. We have also begun to work in collaboration with other rural authorities and the Strategic Migration Partnership and the WLGA to develop solutions suited to rural authorities.</p>
Work with national providers and the Home Office to identify suitable accommodation for those fleeing persecution and ensure that appropriate support services, including trauma informed support, are available.	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships Ongoing	The Home Office has made all local authorities Asylum Dispersal Areas. This has broadened the responsibility for accommodating asylum seekers in Wales which had previously been shouldered by a small number of authorities. The Home Office's continues to struggle to find suitable affordable properties in Monmouthshire. Officers continue to meet with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership and Home Office and indications are that some a small number of properties. The small number of properties we had expected to come forward in 2024-25 are now anticipated in the first half of 2025-26.

Appendix 2 – Risk Radar

In line with Strategic Risk Management Policy, the Council has developed a risk radar. The radar outlines some of the potential risks that Monmouthshire may face over the coming years. This report draws on national and global emerging risks identified in a range of horizon scanning reports, including most prominently the World Economic Forum (WEF) global risks report, UK Government’s National Risk Register and Welsh Government’s Future Trends Report. Evidence from this will help inform risk management by highlighting the key uncertainties and challenges that may affect our organisation's objectives and operations. Consideration will be given to the annual Risk Radar Report when identifying and managing strategic risks and in the Council’s wider service planning.

A range of evidence is collated to inform the radar. An overview of risks identified on the radar can be seen below. Risks have been categorised by a main factor and timescale, some will impact across multiple factor categories and varying timescales.



Appendix 3: Strategic Risk Management – Summary

Risk Management is the process of identifying risks, evaluating their potential consequences and determining the most effective methods of controlling them or responding to them. Strategic risks are those which affect the Council as a whole. Typically these will be key risks which could significantly jeopardise the Council's ability to achieve its objectives, statutory plans and/or provide operational services as planned.

The Council is committed to the effective management of risk. As a large public sector organisation, it is exposed to a wide range of risks and threats in delivering key services to communities. Within the Council the purpose of risk management is to:

- preserve and protect the Council's assets, reputation and staff
- promote corporate governance and aid good management in controlling and managing risks
- support successful delivery of strategic aims, objectives and outcomes
- improve business performance and better anticipate calculated risks where these are likely in delivering improvements
- avoid unnecessary liabilities, costs and failures

The Council seeks to ensure that risk management is effective from strategic to individual services and employees. Therefore, all employees and councillors are responsible for ensuring there are good levels of internal control and risk management throughout the Council in order that the Council's specified outcomes are achieved.

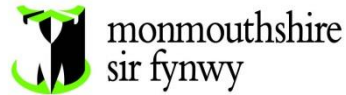
The Council uses a 'traffic light' system of Red/Amber/Green associated with High/Medium/Low to categorise risk levels. This is determined using the risk matrix below.

High risk	The risk is highly likely to occur and the impact will be major. Management action/control evaluation and improvement is required coupled with continued pro-active monitoring
Medium risk	The risk is unlikely to result in a major issue, however, if it did the impact would be significant or serious . This risk is relatively less significant than a High risk however it needs to be closely monitored within timely management action/controls to ensure it does not escalate.
Low risk	The risk is very unlikely to occur and the impact will be minor or moderate at worst. Risk will be managed by seeking control improvements where practical and / or monitoring and reviewing at regular intervals

Risks are also given a score. Scores of 1-4 are low risks, scores of 6-9 are medium risks and scores 12-16 are high risk. Providing a score as well as a risk level allows the variations within risk levels to be more clearly stated.

Major (4)	Low (4)	Medium (8)	High (12)	High (16)
Substantial (3)	Low (3)	Medium (6)	Medium (9)	High (12)
Moderate (2)	Low (2)	Low (4)	Medium (6)	Medium (8)
Minor (1)	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)
	Unlikely (1)	Possible (2)	Likely (3)	Almost certain (4)

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SUBJECT:	Nature Recovery
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	25th June 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1. To seek Cabinet approval of the:

- Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy,
- Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2 (and executive summary),

which together set out the Council's statutory duties, responsibilities, and associated actions for delivery.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1. That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy, and the Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2 as part of the Nature Recovery pillar of the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and associated action plans.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1. As a local authority we have a duty via the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience in the proper exercise of our functions. This means that the responsibility for compliance and delivery sits across all services and functions.
- 3.2. Climate change is having a significant impact on habitats and species and is one of many pressures on our natural world. In 2021 the Senedd declared a 'Nature Emergency' promoted by the State of Nature Report (2019) highlighting the extinction of 17% of species across Wales. In Gwent, the Greater Gwent State of Nature Report (Blaenau Gwent Couty Borough Council, 2021) showed a 34% decline of assessed species. More recently, the State of Nature (State of Nature Partnership, 2023) report makes the stark statement that Wales is now one of the most nature depleted countries on Earth and along with the rest of the world, is facing a biodiversity crisis; with one in six species in Wales at risk of extinction.

3.3. In May 2024 Monmouthshire County Council reviewed the 2019 declaration of the Climate Emergency to include a recognition that the climate and nature crises are interlinked. This review included the development of four interlinked pillars of work:



3.4. The Nature Recovery pillar has a delivery framework composed of three interlinked action plans:

1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Section 6) Forward Plan 2024-28 (Approved by Cabinet in May 2024)
2. Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy
3. Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Vol 1&2

The relationship between the three plans is illustrated in Appendix 4.

3.5. The Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) (Appendix 2) helps to deliver the Council's commitments under the Climate and Nature Emergency and Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The NRAP aims to provide practical, achievable actions designed to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire. Supported by the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) the Plan will comprise 4 Parts. Part 1 is the Strategy that sets out our approach for nature recovery in Monmouthshire and a general Action Plan. Parts 2, 3 & 4 will be developed in collaboration with the Local Nature Partnership and will comprise, Habitat Action Plans, Species Action Plans, and a collation of case studies of projects.

Nature Recovery Action Plan Part 1: Strategy includes the following key areas:

- Policies, plans and procedures.
- Education and Awareness
- Evidence and Understanding
- Promoting Ecosystem Resilience
- LNP Governance and Monitoring

3.6. The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (Appendix 3a, b & c) sets out the Council's approach to enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience through GI in line with the Forward Plan prepared under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It

also sets out the Council's approach to improving health and wellbeing outcomes through GI in line with objectives of the Gwent Well-being Plan (2023), South East Wales Area Statement, Monmouthshire's Communities and Corporate Plan and the emerging Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, seeking to deliver climate action through landscape scale projects and partnerships.

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy

Core Aims:

- 1 Enrich people's lives through engagement and activity
- 2 Build strong and vibrant places and communities in Monmouthshire
- 3 Conserve, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's GI assets

GI Objectives:

- Improve Health & Wellbeing
- Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience
- Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness
- Increase Climate Change Resilience
- Support Sustainable Economic Development

3.7. Following Place Scrutiny and the approval of Cabinet in 2024, the public consultation was launched at The Usk Show on the 14th of September 2024 and followed the below methodology and timeframe:

Date	Location	Method
14 th September 2024	Usk County Show	Launch public consultation (including public questionnaire on Nature & Climate)
15 th September 2024	Online	Press release issued advertising consultation, press release promoted on social media and via mailing lists
7 th October 2024	Libraries and Hubs*	Consultation advertised on information boards and posters in libraries for green libraries week. Hard copies made available.
31 st October 2024		Consultation closed

*Caldicot, Chepstow, Abergavenny, Monmouth, Gilwern and Magor

A consultation report has been prepared to detail the methods used, consultation responses received, and minor changes proposed (Appendix 5).

3.8. Appendix 6 refers to the use of the integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA) process to design projects and ensure that we are engaging with underserved groups. This has been a workstream of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership and can be rolled out for wider Green Infrastructure project delivery.

3.9. During the development of the current adopted Green Infrastructure Strategy which forms the basis of the 2025 review, Town Councils were integral to the co-development of Volume 2 Delivery Plan and the supporting Action Plan which lists the aspirations for GI delivery. The Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and the GI

strategy are intended to be live documents that are reviewed and updated as aspirations and projects develop.

- 3.10 Reference to the importance of working with Town and Community Councils is made in the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan under **Section 1.2 Who is it For?** Also, **Section 4 General Action Plan G2.2** provides an action to: *Engage with communities, schools, businesses, landowners and town and community councils to promote understanding of biodiversity in their area and work together to encourage appropriate management and actions to achieve nature recovery.*
- 3.11 Strategic engagement is undertaken through the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership and includes a combination of engagement with T&CC who contact the LPA for help and co-delivery, and those that are targeted for delivery. This could relate to ecological need or the need to target underserved groups in those areas.

4 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting).

- 4.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The GI Strategy and Nature Recovery Action Plan have significant positive contributions to make to the Wellbeing Goals. A Healthier Wales through health and wellbeing opportunities through projects and partnerships, well connected multifunctional green spaces and community growing initiatives. There are also benefits for a Resilient Wales, based on supporting nature-based solutions for land management, raised awareness through training and education of the nature crisis and working in partnership to deliver landscape scale projects to support resilient ecological networks. There is also significant potential to contribute to Cohesive Communities, by working collaboratively and in partnership with our communities to deliver a place making approach. Finally, contributing to a Globally Responsible Wales through sustainable use of natural resources to support Monmouthshire's local green economy and develop skills and learning. There are no negative impacts on the Well-being Goals.
- 4.3 There are no significant positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristics, safeguarding or corporate parenting. The principles of Long term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement have been used throughout the development of the Action Plans.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Doing nothing is not an option. Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity where it is within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems. This means that Monmouthshire County Council must take a pro-active approach to improve and not reduce biodiversity when carrying out its functions. The NRAP and GI Strategies are the framework for delivery of this statutory function.
- 5.2 In addition, the 2024 publication of Planning Policy Wales edition 12, which emphasises delivery of biodiversity and green infrastructure aims to avoid biodiversity loss, provide Net Benefit for Biodiversity, and protect and

enhance green infrastructure, setting out requirements for Green Infrastructure Assessments / Strategies as part of the planning process.

5.3 The GI Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Action Plan will also help provide a mechanism for the delivery of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill which was introduced to the Senedd on the 2nd June 2025, when it becomes law. This Bill aims to:

- Establish certain environmental principles and an environmental objective into Welsh law;
- Establish an independent environmental governance body for Wales;
- Amend the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to establish a biodiversity target setting framework aimed at halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity in Wales, as well as imposing a duty on the Welsh Ministers to promote awareness in Wales of the importance of, and the threats to, biodiversity

5.4 The law will place a duty on Welsh public authorities to contribute to the delivery of the statutory biodiversity target delivered through our Local Nature Recovery Action Plan including a Nature Positive target which will become statutory as per S6 Forward Plan so will include reporting.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Updates on progress will be reported upon in line with statutory requirements as set out in the Section 6 duty including six-monthly updates to the Monmouthshire Council Climate and Nature Steering Group and statutory reporting to Welsh Government every three years (next round by end 2025). The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill will also have requirements for associated statutory reporting when it becomes law.

7 REASONS:

7.1 To ensure that the Council delivers upon its statutory Biodiversity Section 6 duty, emerging requirements of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill, and seeks to fulfil requirements of Planning Policy Wales edition 12, supporting the Gwent Well Being Plan, and South East Wales Area Statement. It will also address the commitments of the Council's Community and Corporate Plan and Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 Actions will be funded in different ways, some are zero cost or will require core funded officer time alone, others will involve project and partnership funding delivered through current grant programmes. It is anticipated that where additional funds are needed, these will be subject to subsequent decision-making processes.

9 CONSULTTEES:

- 9.1 As part of the NRAP preparation, the Local Nature Partnership were directly consulted to allow co-production. The Draft NRAP and Draft GI Strategy were also taken to Place Scrutiny in May 2024 for approval of a public consultation. This consultation was undertaken in Autumn 2024 and only minor amendments were required to the NRAP with no changes required for the GI Strategy.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Nature Recovery Action Plan

Appendix 3a, 3b and 3c – Green Infrastructure Strategy Executive Summary, Volume 1 & Volume 2

Appendix 4 – Nature Recovery Diagram (2025)

Appendix 5 – Public Consultation Report

Appendix 6 –Integrated Health Impact Assessment

11 AUTHOR:

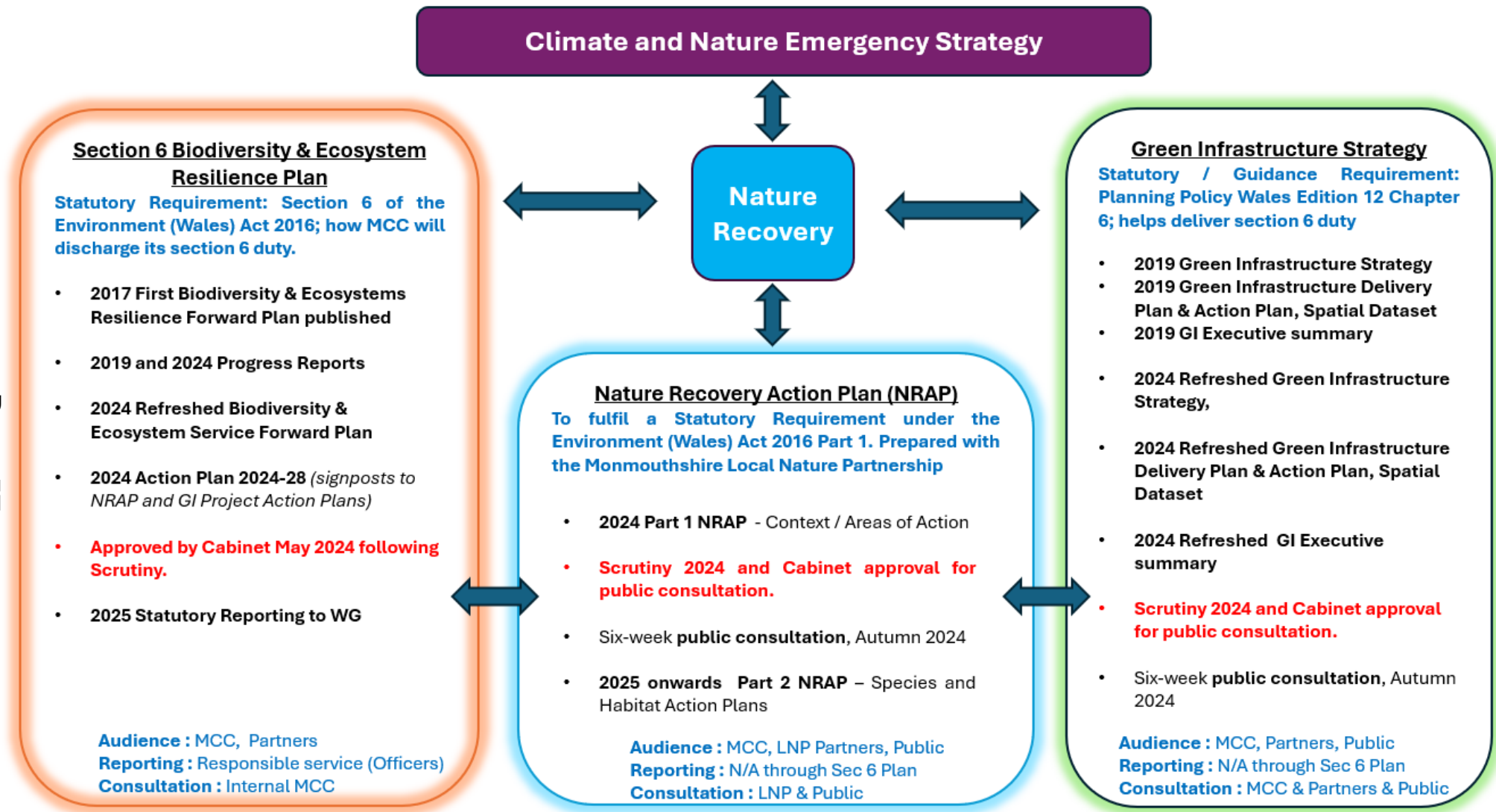
Kate Stinchcombe, Nature Recovery and Land Use Manager

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

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E-mail: KateStinchcombe@monmouthshire.gov.uk

APPENDIX 4 Nature Recovery Diagram (2025)



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Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Kate Stinchcombe Phone no: 01633644684 E-mail: katestinchcombe@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal To seek Cabinet approval of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy,• Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2, which together set out the Council's statutory duties, responsibilities and associated actions for delivery
Name of Service area: Green Infrastructure	Date: 25 th June 2025

7. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	The outcomes of Green Infrastructure creation and enhancement include benefits to people of all ages including the older and younger members of our community who are most vulnerable to the detrimental effects of climate change. Elements of the NRAP and GI strategy to be implemented by MCC are predominantly grant funded. Positive impacts on protected characteristics are typically requirements of this funding delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	The outcomes of Green Infrastructure creation and enhancement are disability inclusive.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Gender reassignment	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Pregnancy or maternity	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Race	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Religion or Belief	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sex	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A
Sexual Orientation	Underserved groups, as identified in our HIA, are target for involvement and engagement in GI delivery.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on protected characteristics.	N/A

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

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The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions. This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	This decision will not have any adverse impacts on those at socio-economic disadvantage. Social inclusion is an outcome of GI delivery. The GI approach promotes free access to green spaces and nature meaning health and wellbeing benefits are available to everyone regardless of their income. Underserved groups are target for involvement and engagement in Green Infrastructure delivery	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan on socio-economic duty and social justice.	N/A

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.


How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	All communications and project materials including signage and interpretation are prepared bilingually. Promotion of species and habitat names in welsh through communications increases the vocabulary of english speakers, welsh learners and welsh speakers.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan	N/A
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Welsh language skills are identified as desirable on relevant post adverts. Training is available and encouraged.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan.	N/A
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	All communications and project materials including signage and interpretation are prepared bilingually. Promotion of species and habitat names in welsh through communications increases the vocabulary of english speakers, welsh learners and welsh speakers.	There are no negative impacts of the Strategy or Plan	N/A




4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!


Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	The action plans directly contribute to the Prosperous Wales vision of a low carbon society and action on climate change. There is the potential for green skills to be developed.	None
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	The action plans contribute to more sustainable management of green spaces and includes measures which will build resilience of ecosystems and assist nature recovery.	None
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Green Infrastructure will improve air quality and increasing walking and cycling will improve physical and mental health.	None
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Many of the actions will involve working closely with local communities to produce local community benefits. Green Infrastructure including cycling and walking routes should increase connectivity between communities, particularly for those without a car.	None
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	Activities to raise awareness of the climate and nature emergency in a local settings can contribute to community behaviour change and wider impacts on lifestyle and consumer choices i.e. think global act local.	None
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People	Welsh language will be used for all Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery communications in line with the Welsh Language measure. The GI	None

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	approach promotes connectedness to nature through nature based solutions as part of the welsh culture and heritage.	
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery delivery involves work with stakeholders, community groups, individuals of all ages and all backgrounds, to help us achieve our ambitions	None

4. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	The Nature Recovery Action Plan and GI Strategy consider outcomes and benefits for the long term. The nature of green infrastructure delivery e.g. walking and cycling routes, tree planting and nature based solutions, have a legacy following initial delivery including supporting wellbeing, storing carbon and water, providing habitats for species. Whilst the plans have long term benefits, we are reliant on short term grant funding. However, alternative funding mechanisms e.g. green finance are being explored.	None

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>Many of the actions in the GI Strategy and NRAP are being delivered through collaboration, both with community groups, and other regional stakeholders e.g. Natural Resources Wales.</p>	<p>None</p>
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>The strategy and action plans have been through Scrutiny and public consultation. We will continue to involve stakeholders through the delivery of the GI Strategy and Nature Recovery Action Plans, for example Local Nature Partnership, town and community councils, community groups and individuals.</p>	<p>None</p>
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Prevention is at the core of the Strategy and NRAP. Identifying our Green Infrastructure, habitats and species and establishing ways to maintain and promote ecosystem resilience to prevent further loss and reverse decline.</p>	<p>None</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>There is great benefit from working in a collaborative, integrated and joined-up way to deliver GI through a multi-disciplinary approach. The Strategy sets out Monmouthshire County Council's approach to the planning, management and delivery of Green Infrastructure (GI) focussed around the following strategic objectives and priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Health & Wellbeing • Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience • Support Climate & Nature Resilience • Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness • Support Sustainable Economic Development. <p>In doing so, the GI Strategy will help contribute to the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement Local Development Plan • MCC Community and Corporate Plan • MCC Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plans • MCC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan and Action Plan • MCC Nature Recovery Action Plan • Public Service Board Wellbeing Plans. 	None

5. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	There are no safeguarding implications	.None	There are no impacts on safeguarding.
Corporate Parenting	There are no corporate safeguarding implications.	None	There are no impacts on corporate parenting.

6. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

Evidence for the urgency to take action to tackle climate change has come from numerous IPCC reports, such as:
<https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

Local information about nature and wellbeing has come from reports such as:

- Wellbeing Assessment, 3rd UK Climate Change Risk Assessment,
- Wales State of Nature Report, 2023,
- Greater Gwent State of Nature report 2021
- Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan 2022
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 8 Habitats and Species of Principle Importance for Nature Conservation in Wales
- Results of the 2024 public consultation for GI Strategy and Nature Recovery Action Plan
- Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan
- Monmouthshire Draft Landscape character Supplementary Planning Guidance 2017
- Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Guidance 2015
- Report on use of integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA)

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SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The Green Infrastructure Strategy and Nature Recovery Action Plan have significant positive contributions to make to the Wellbeing Goals. In particular a Healthier Wales through health and wellbeing opportunities through projects and partnerships, well connected multifunctional green spaces and community growing initiatives. There are also benefits for a Resilient Wales, based on supporting nature-based solutions for land management, raised awareness through training and education of the nature crisis and working in partnership to deliver landscape scale projects to support resilient ecological networks. There is also significant potential to contribute to Cohesive Communities, by working collaboratively and in partnership with our communities. Finally contributing to a Globally Responsible Wales through sustainable use of natural resources to support Monmouthshire's local green economy and develop skills and learning. There are no negative impacts on the Well-being Goals.

There are no significant positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristics, safeguarding or corporate parenting. The principles of Long term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement have been used throughout the development of the Action Plans.

8. **ACTIONS:** As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
N/A		

9. **VERSION CONTROL:** The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Page 6 of 6

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Business Cabinet	10 th June 2025	<i>More reference to use of the integrated Health Impact Assessment (see also appendix 6 of Cabinet Report)</i>
2	Cabinet	25 th June 2025	

A photograph of a purple orchid in a field of tall grass and yellow buttercups. The orchid is in sharp focus, showing its intricate details. The background is a soft-focus field of green grass and yellow flowers.

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Local Nature Recovery Action Plan

v1 2025

Page 69

Title	Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan
Version	Final
Version Date	2025

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

Coordinated and distributed by:

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Monmouthshire Local
Nature Partnership



Partneriaeth Natur
Lleol Sir Fynwy

Part 1: Strategy

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This document is hyperlinked. Click on **bold green** text for references.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) is a guide to conservation work in Monmouthshire to deliver outcomes to benefit nature recovery. The plan aims to provide practical, achievable actions designed to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire. We want to motivate communities to actively contribute to the effective restoration and protection of nature in Monmouthshire.

The Monmouthshire Local NRAP has been produced by the Monmouthshire **Local Nature Partnership (LNP)**. The LNP exists to co-ordinate, promote and record conservation actions to promote and enhance nature locally. The Monmouthshire LNP covers the local authority area of Monmouthshire County Council, excluding that in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park which has a separate Local Nature Partnership and **Local NRAP**. For ease of use we refer to the area covered by the LNP and this NRAP as "Monmouthshire" throughout the document.

The Local NRAP is being collated and edited by LNP coordinators hosted by Monmouthshire County Council in collaboration with key partners with expertise and responsibilities for conservation and nature recovery in Monmouthshire. It is intended to be a "living document" with regular updates to record and expand on the work of the LNP.

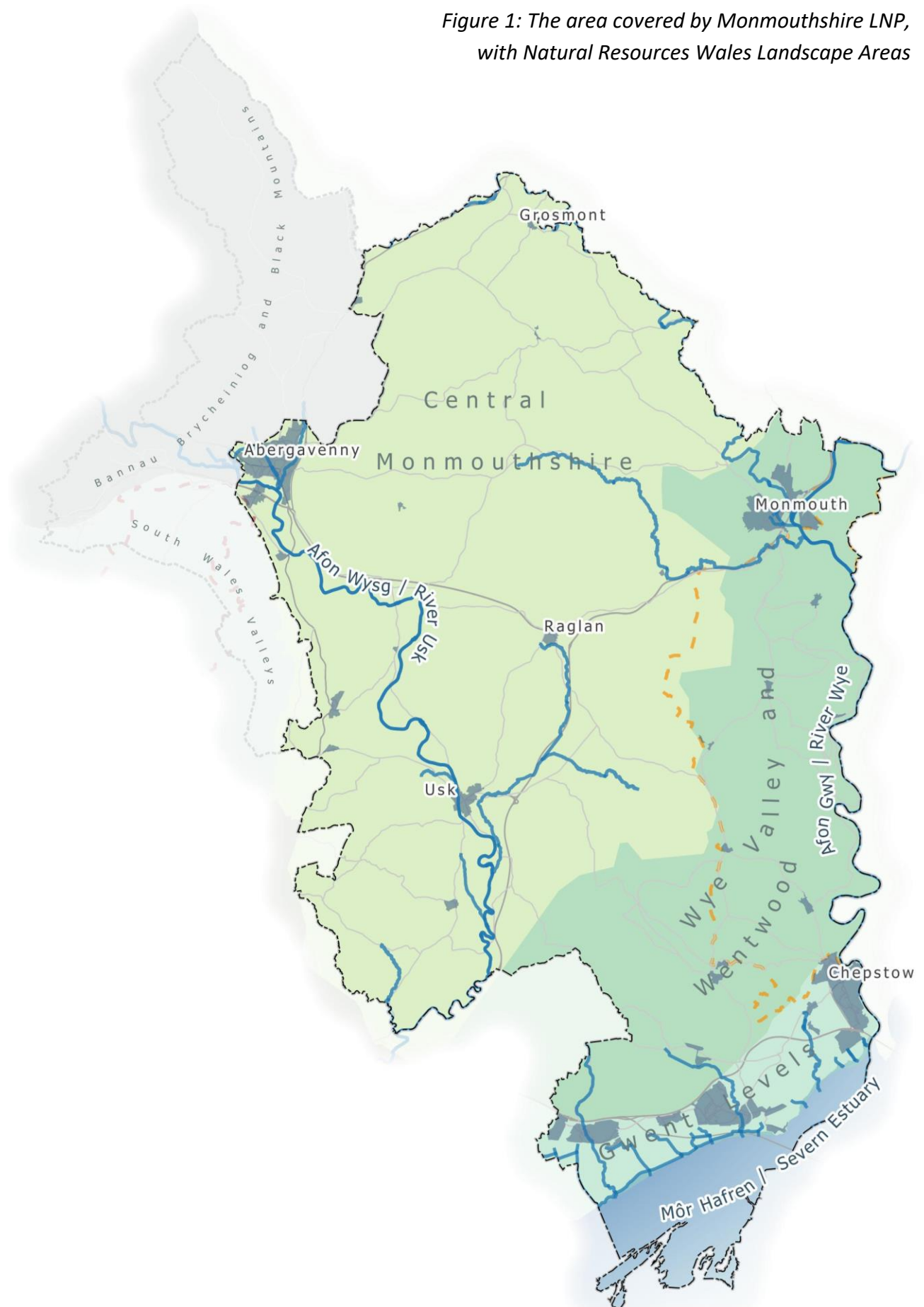
Box 1: The Local NRAP and Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership

The LNP is a key mechanism for delivering a Local NRAP for Monmouthshire, but the NRAP is also fundamental in delivering the aims of the LNP to: **Co-ordinate, promote and record existing and new actions to conserve, promote and enhance nature in Monmouthshire...taking account of local and national priorities.**

The Local NRAP meets the purposes of the LNP set out in the Terms of Reference through:

- Enabling partnership working between key organisations and individuals that protect and enhance nature in Monmouthshire.
- Supporting the development of projects undertaken by individual organisations to address local priorities.
- Identifying opportunities for integrating the conservation, promotion, and enhancement of nature into other policy areas, plans and projects throughout Monmouthshire.
- Supporting and encouraging new and existing action groups to take forward the implementation of actions identified in the plans.
- Raising awareness of nature conservation related issues and priorities in Monmouthshire

Figure 1: The area covered by Monmouthshire LNP, with Natural Resources Wales Landscape Areas



1.1. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The Local NRAP is a replacement of the Monmouthshire **Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)**, published in 2005 by the predecessor to the LNP, Monmouthshire Biodiversity Partnership. The LBAP included action plans for six habitats and 15 species. The Local NRAP will expand on the work started by the LBAP, identify current priorities and threats, and revise the actions to bring them up to date.

The **NRAP for Wales** was launched in 2015 and sets out how Wales will deliver the commitments of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. The NRAP for Wales is broad, designed to be a guide for all public bodies in Wales that sets out the objectives to support Welsh Government's ambition **"to reverse the decline in biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, and to ensure benefits to society"**.

The **Greater Gwent NRAP** was produced by Resilient Greater Gwent and Gwent Green Grid Partnerships and published in 2022. It provides guidance and recommendations on nature recovery actions within the Greater Gwent area, i.e. Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Newport, and Monmouthshire. The Greater Gwent NRAP encourages partnership working between all public bodies and organisations within Greater Gwent and promotes a regional approach to nature recovery at all levels, aligned to national and local priorities.

Monmouthshire County Council published its **Forward Plan** in 2017. The plan was produced to meet the Section 6 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience duty of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and to provide a mechanism for delivering the County's requirements under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Monmouthshire County Council have a duty to report every three years on progress made in delivering the plan. The 2023 report has identified the need to refresh the Forward Plan which will include eight objectives and actions for delivery over the next 4 years.

Our Local NRAP will take the objectives established in the regional and national plans and turn them into deliverable actions that we can achieve within the LNP, for our local sites and our local communities.




Figure 2 on Page 7 is hyperlinked. Click on plan and strategy titles for more information. A summary of the policy and legislation underpinning the NRAP is also given in **Appendix 1**

Consistent with the NRAP for Wales, this Local NRAP does not include actions for marine habitats. Refer to the Severn Estuary Partnership for actions affecting the Severn Estuary.




Figure 2: The relationship between plans



1.2. WHO IS IT FOR?

The Local NRAP is for anyone undertaking operations, projects or action in Monmouthshire which may affect biodiversity or nature recovery.

- ✦ It is for individuals, community groups and conservation bodies carrying out boots-on-the-ground conservation activities.
- ✦ It is for businesses looking to contribute to effective nature recovery. It is for developers to inform meaningful net benefit for biodiversity as part of their developments in Monmouthshire.
- ✦ It is for the county, town, and community councils to aid and guide their functions whilst meeting the Section 6 biodiversity duty.
- ✦ It is both a source of activities to be funded and an evidence base for funding applications.

Figure 3: Contributors and users of the Local NRAP



Box 2: The Local NRAP and Monmouthshire County Council

Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on public authorities to seek to **maintain and enhance biodiversity where it is within the proper exercise of their functions**. In doing so, public authorities must seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems. This means that Monmouthshire County Council must take a pro-active approach to improve and not reduce biodiversity when carrying out its functions. The legislation also requires Public Bodies to prepare a 'Forward Plan' to outline how they shall meet the duty and report on that plan every three years from the first reporting round in 2019.

Monmouthshire County Council declared a **Climate Emergency** in 2019. The first Climate Emergency Action Plan identified the importance of managing green spaces to reduce energy use, absorb carbon and be resilient. However, when it was updated in 2021, the emphasis on nature recovery was strengthened and an action on addressing water quality was added to improve protection of our rivers and coasts.

In March 2022, a **Motion for Rivers and Ocean** was passed by elected members, taking the Motion for the Ocean model developed by the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group, and adapting it to recognise the importance of taking a catchment to coast approach to protecting water quality. Monmouthshire County Council produced a report containing recommendations for how the council should act to realise clean, healthy and productive rivers and oceans, alongside the commitment to tackle the climate emergency.

In April 2023, Monmouthshire County Council published the **Community and Corporate Plan 2022-2028**, which aims to take Monmouthshire forward, working together for a fairer, greener, more successful county. The objectives of the plan include making Monmouthshire a "green place" to live work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.

Following two rounds of statutory reporting and a rapidly changing landscape for nature recovery in Monmouthshire and Wales, Monmouthshire County Council are publishing revised Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan, which will be available mid-2024.

The Local NRAP is a key element to effective delivery of these plans and strategies by providing practical actions that meet the objectives of strategic plans, as well as promoting collaborative working with communities and other stakeholders to achieve common goals.



1.3. WHY DO WE NEED A LOCAL NRAP?

1.3.1. UNDERSTANDING BIODIVERSITY

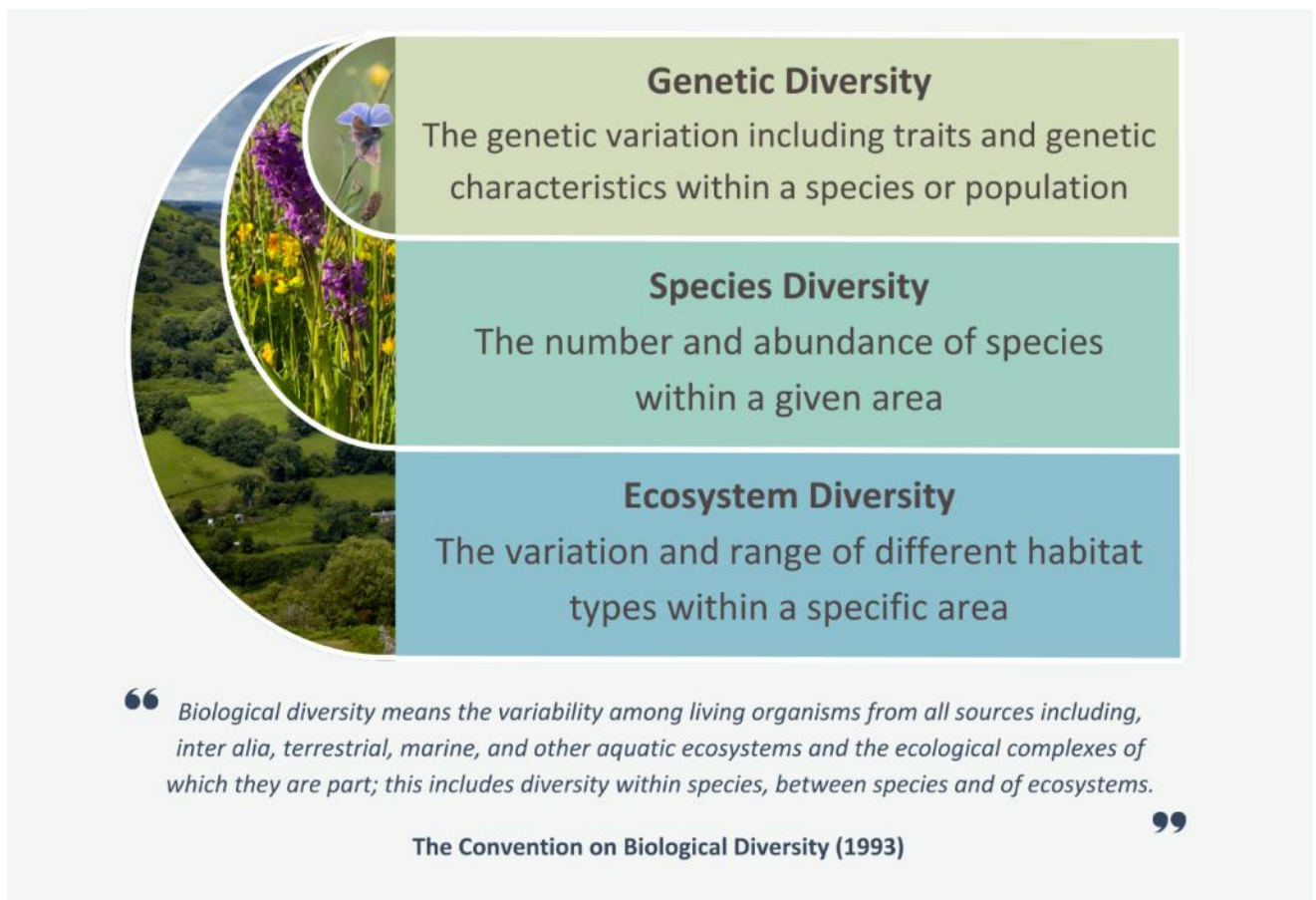
Biodiversity is short for biological diversity and simply means the variety of life. It includes all the living things that occur in the natural world and the variation between them. Biodiversity is not just about the number of species that occur in a place, it also includes the genetic variation between and within species, and the interactions between species and individuals.

Biodiversity is not just restricted to rare or threatened species, although Monmouthshire has plenty of both, it encompasses all living things in the natural world, from those that are common to those that are critically endangered.

Nature, although more commonly understood, is perhaps more difficult to define. Nature is broader than biodiversity, encompassing not only species and habitats but all the physical processes on Earth that create and support life. An ecosystem is a dynamic and interconnected system of living organisms and physical environment contained within specific geographical area. When we talk of "**nature recovery**" we talk of restoring species populations, habitat condition, natural processes and all the things in between that make up a healthy and resilient ecosystem.

Nature Recovery is essential because nature plays a critical role in all aspects of our lives, and there is substantial evidence for the negative impacts of degraded ecosystem services on life as we know it.

Figure 4: Definition of Biodiversity



1.3.2. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

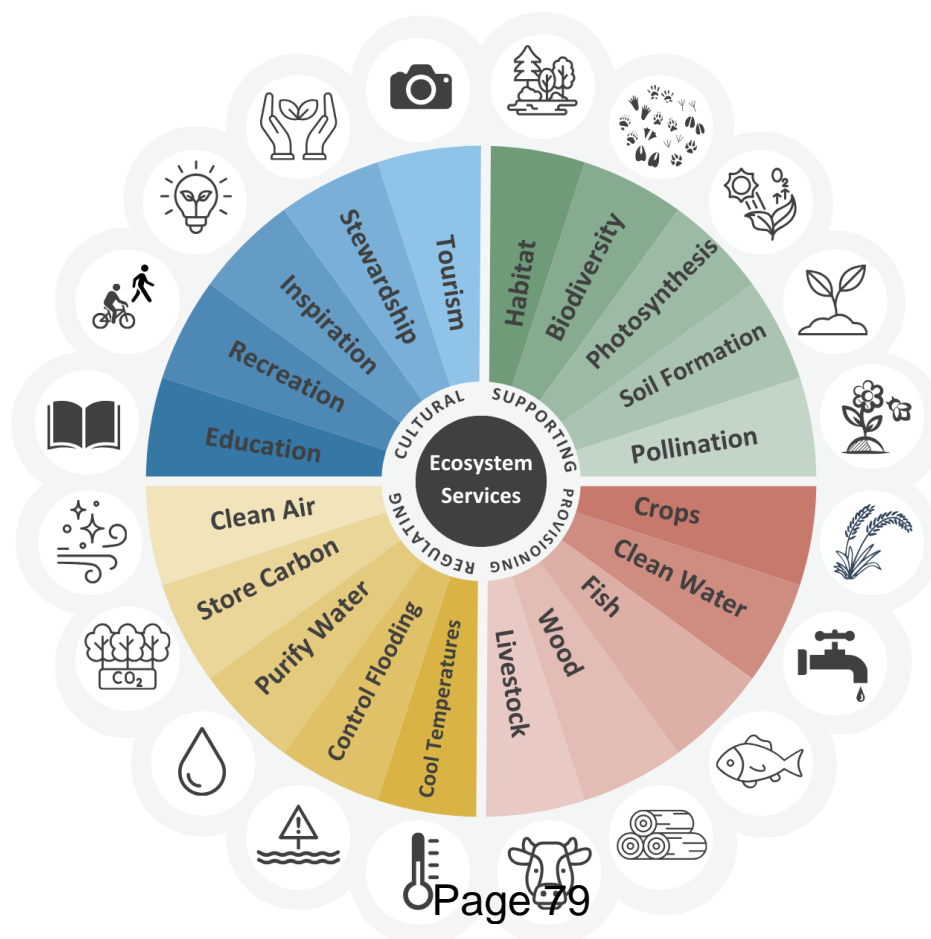
Ecosystem Services are the natural systems which create an environment in which we can live and thrive, ranging from providing resources, temperature and flood regulation and mitigation, to cultural benefits including recreation and well-being. Biodiversity underpins most, if not all, essential ecosystem services including provision of food, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration.

The most vital ecosystem services provided by biodiversity are provision of oxygen and carbon sequestration through photosynthesis; the process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere by plants, broken down into carbon for growth and oxygen released back into the air for us to breathe. As plants grow, they store carbon in their leaves, twigs, and trunks, and importantly in their roots and the soil around them.

Ecosystem services help society adapt to a changing climate and provide mitigation for flooding. Trees and woodlands play a crucial role in mitigating air pollution, minimising noise, and providing cooling and shade. Green spaces and access to nature provides opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles. Evidence supports associations between access to nature and increased mental well-being.

The concept of ecosystem services is proven to be successful in demonstrating the necessity of taking action for nature recovery. It also provides us with criteria to measure impacts and demonstrate success, but our use of the term does not mean we consider the intrinsic value of nature and biodiversity any less.

Figure 5: Ecosystems services



1.3.3. ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE

Ecosystem resilience refers to the ability of an ecosystem to withstand disturbances, adapt to changes, and recover its structure and function after being exposed to various stresses or shocks. This concept is a fundamental aspect of ecology and its importance in the fields of conservation and nature recovery has been recognised in recent years.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) developed the **DECCA** framework (sometimes also the DECC framework) which describes the attributes which contribute to a resilient ecosystem; **Diversity, Extent, Condition and Connectivity**. The first iteration of the framework included Adaptability which is now replaced by "other **Aspects**" to recognise that adaptability is a function of the four key attributes. The speed and success of nature recovery and species climate-change adaptation will mainly depend on actions that maintain or enhance all four attributes of resilience (see Figure 7).

In 2010, Defra published "**Making Space for Nature**", known as The Lawton Report, which provides the most succinct conclusion on what is required; *"the essence of what needs to be done to enhance the resilience and coherence of [an] ecological network can be summarised in four words: **more, bigger, better and joined**"*. Small, isolated sites do not contain enough food, shelter or genetic diversity required to support sustainable populations. We need **more** sites that are rich in biodiversity. We need **bigger** sites to allow for larger, more stable, populations and greater diversity of habitats and species composition. We need **better** quality sites and to manage sites better, to ensure protected sites are not degraded by neglect, inappropriate management, or development. And we need to **join** our nature sites to allow movement between populations, allow species to move away from sites where they can no longer thrive, or repopulate an area.

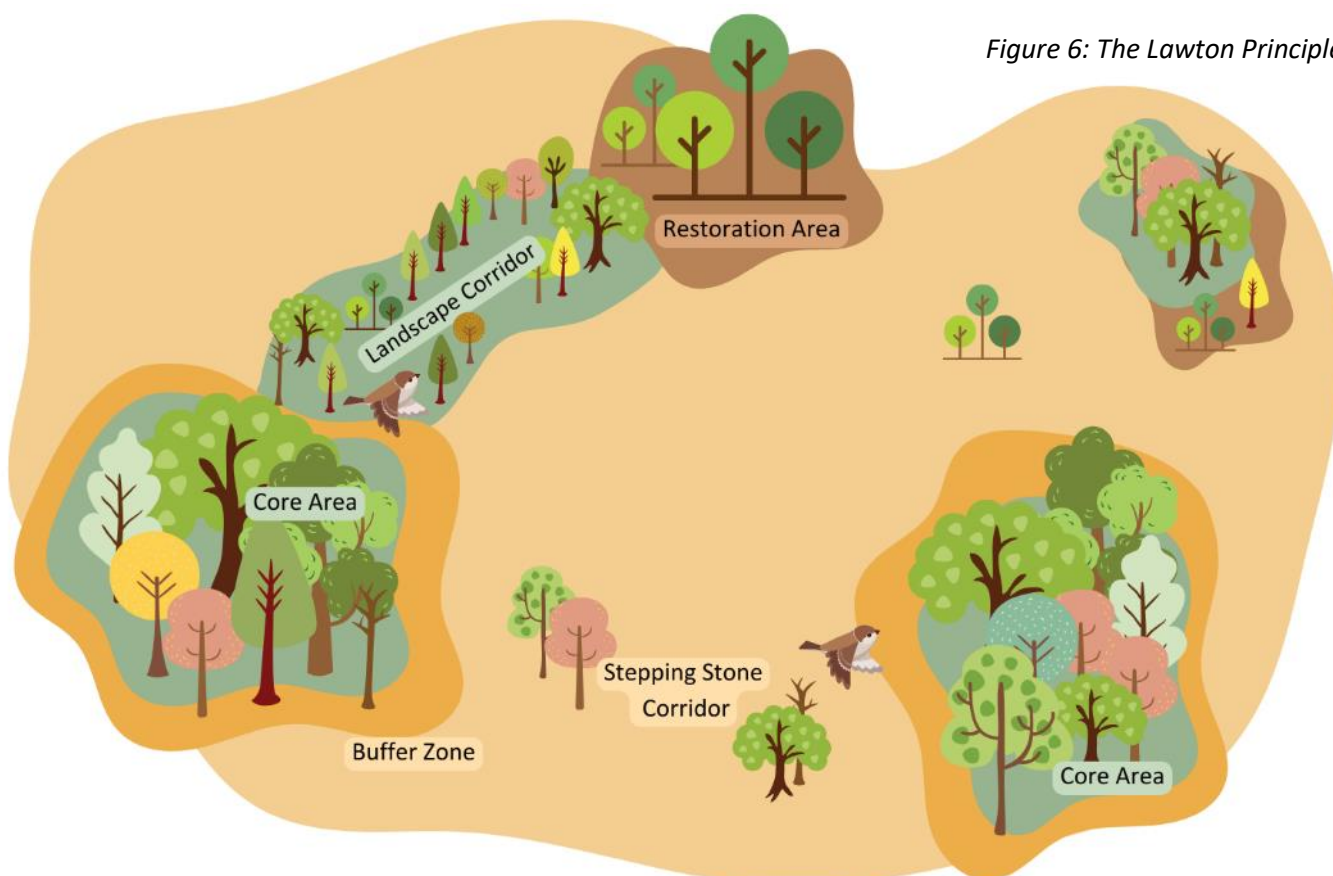
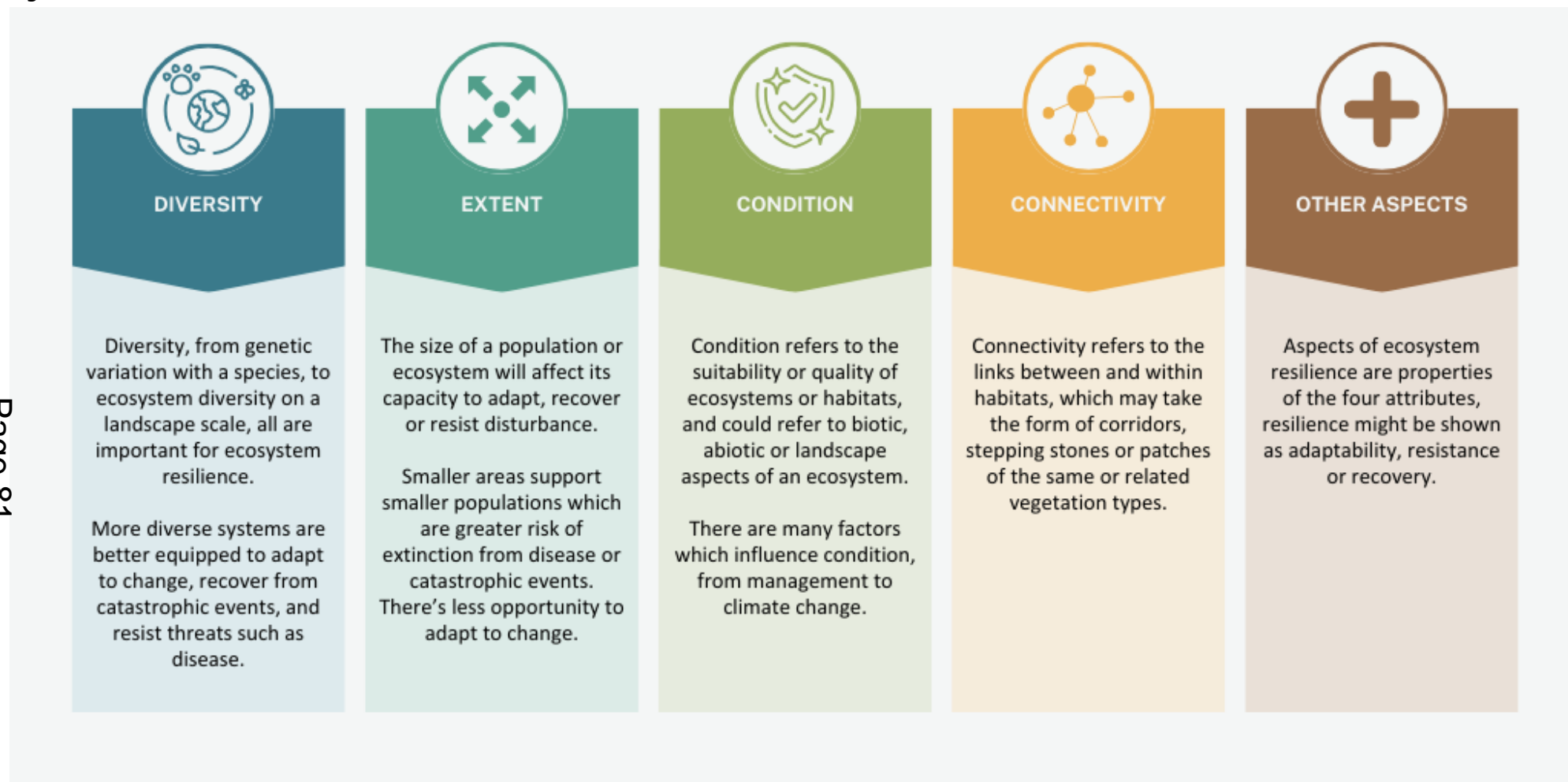


Figure 6: The Lawton Principles

Figure 7. The Decca Framework



1.4. BIODIVERSITY IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

Monmouthshire is a large and varied county, with distinct differences between north and south, east and west. It is a coastal county, but its estuary location means that it is often not viewed as such. The **South East Wales Area Statement** identified three landscape profile areas in Monmouthshire which are useful to illustrate the differences across the county: **Central Monmouthshire**, **Wye Valley and Wentwood**, and the **Gwent Levels**. The landscape profiles primarily share the same natural habitats but with clear differences which give them their distinctive character. The areas covered by each profile are shown on **Figure 1**.

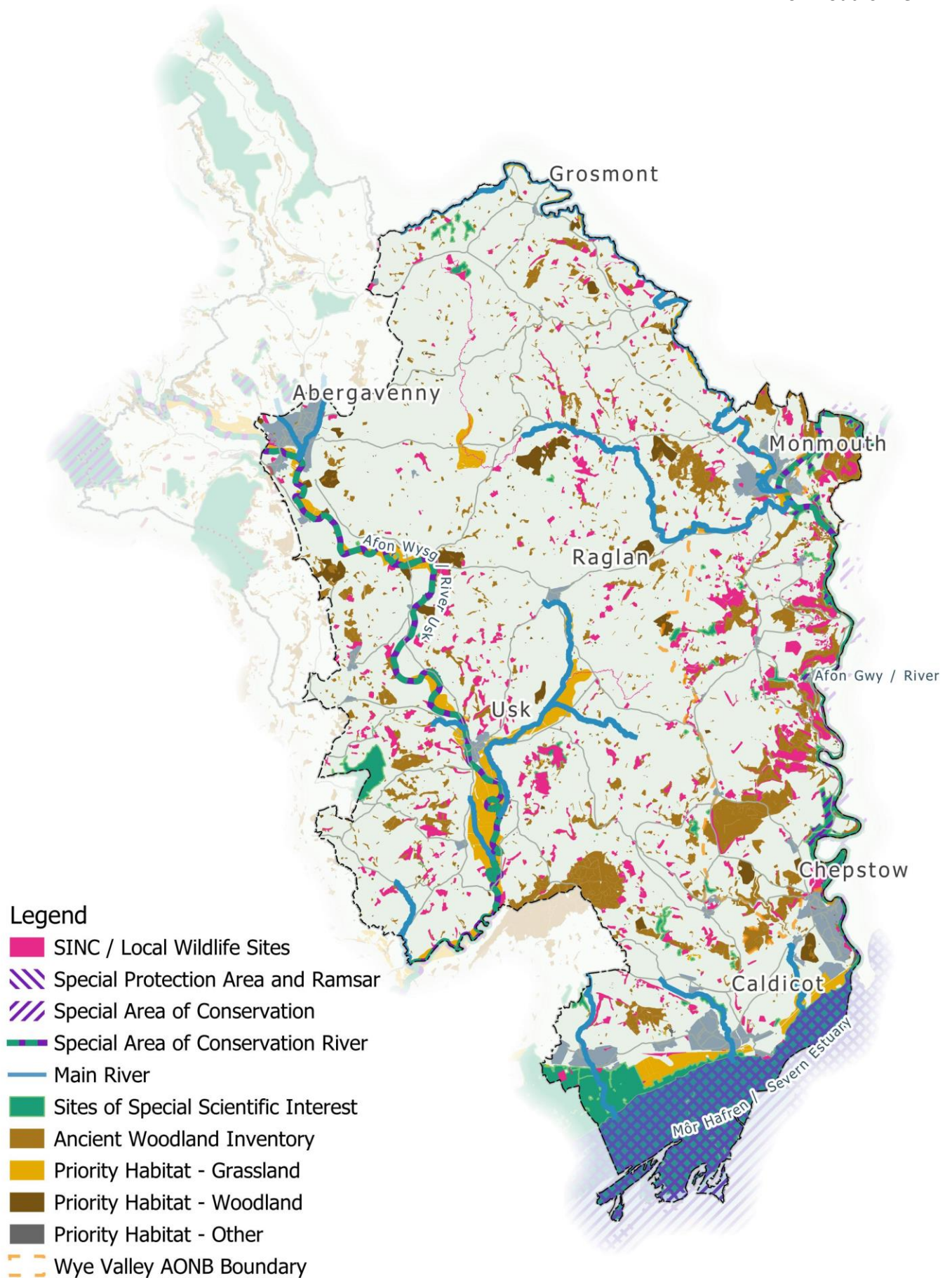
Central Monmouthshire is noted for its undulating lowlands comprising pasture and arable farmland with isolated pockets of woodland. It is a valuable farming area with agriculturally improved pasture and arable fields. Hedgerows provide important links between small, isolated, ancient woodlands, often on hilltops and steep valley sides where farming is difficult. Parcels of unimproved grassland remain, and considered in the context of massive historical decline are of significant ecological importance.

Wye Valley and Wentwood is predominantly a wooded and riverine landscape. The steep sides of the Wye Valley are clothed in extensive blocks of internationally important woodlands, designated as the Wye Valley Woodlands **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**. The Wye Valley is home to internationally important bat species including greater horseshoe bats and lesser horseshoe bats, with many of their roosts included in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC. Parts of the Wye Valley are known to be used by at least 15 different species of bats including the rare Barbastelle bat and Bechstein's bat. The Wye Valley is also a stronghold for dormouse, and polecats reintroduced in England have been observed on this side of the river on more than one occasion.

In the south, the unique **Gwent Levels** form an extensive coastal habitat along the Severn Estuary comprising reclaimed agricultural land drained by a network of ditches known as reens. The reens support a particularly diverse community of water plants and aquatic invertebrates and are designated as a **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**. Following a successful reintroduction program at Magor Marsh SSSI in 2012, water voles have spread across the Gwent Levels with the furthest record 16 km from the original release site.



Figure 8: Protected Sites and Priority Habitats
in Monmouthshire



The two major rivers in Monmouthshire are the River Usk and River Wye. Both are designated as Special Areas of Conservation and together with their tributaries provide important wildlife corridors and migratory routes for key species such as salmon, otters, shad and white clawed crayfish. Another important freshwater habitat in Monmouthshire is the Llandegfedd Reservoir, designated as a SSSI for supporting overwintering wildfowl. The breakdown of protected sites is shown in Figure 9 and more information on the legislation behind protected sites is given in [Appendix 2](#).

Despite having a wealth of protected and priority species, Monmouthshire's ecosystems are currently facing significant challenges. Grassland sites are at risk from poor management and development pressures. The Wye Valley is our most ecologically rich area, but the quality of the woodland is under threat from lack of management and the spread of ash dieback. A large proportion of reens and ditches on the Gwent Levels are degraded. Freshwater habitats are under threat from water abstraction, pollution, and siltation. Monmouthshire, like the rest of the world, is facing a Nature Emergency.

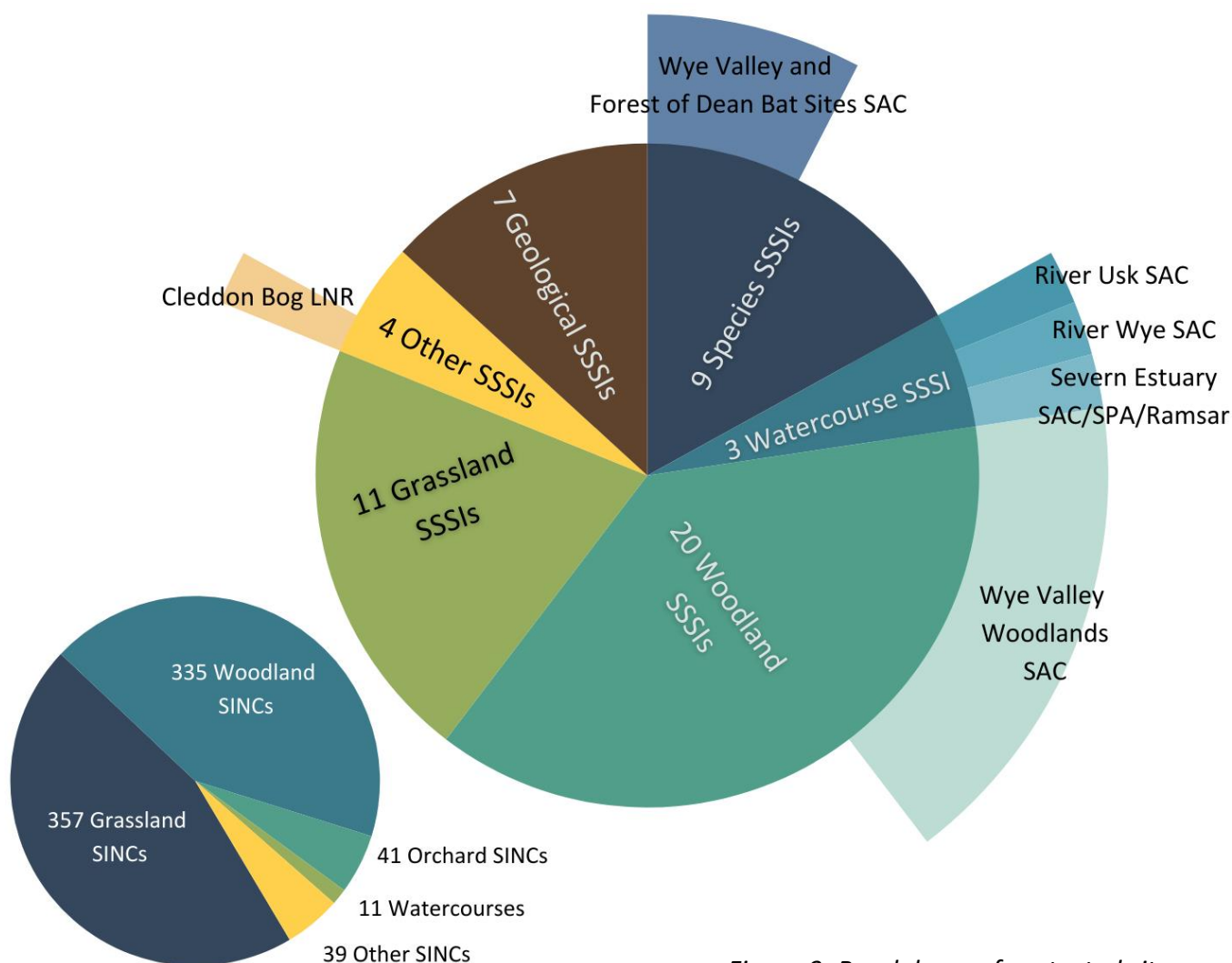


Figure 9: Breakdown of protected sites in Monmouthshire

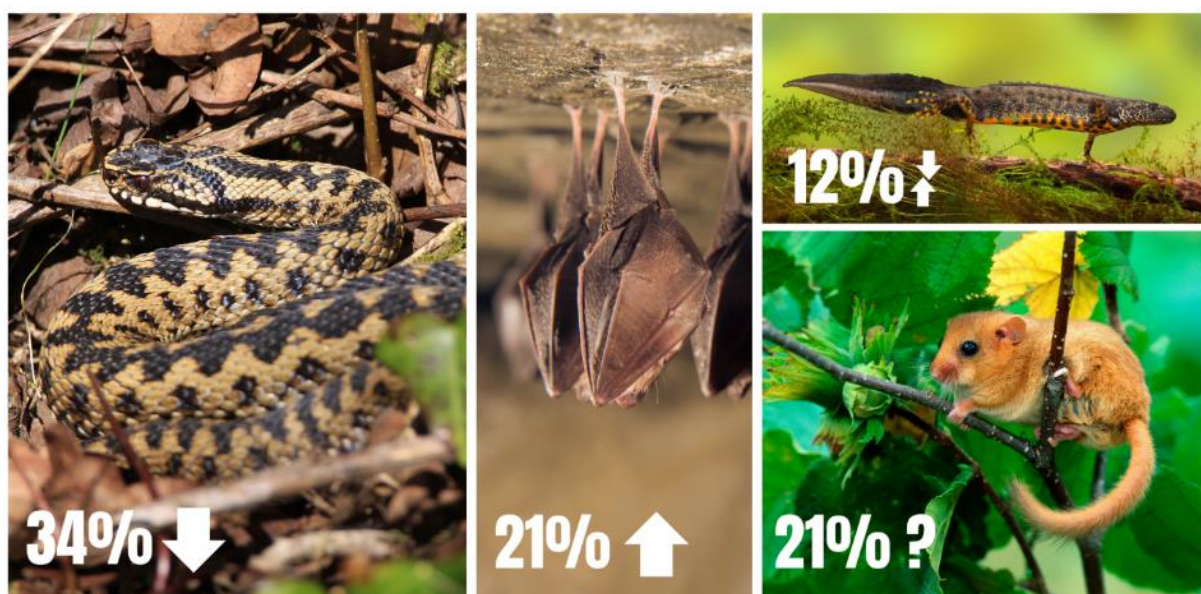
2. NATURE EMERGENCY

We are in the midst of a global nature crisis. The planet is changing as a result of human activity and biodiversity loss is the clearest warning sign that we are facing a planetary emergency. In June 2021, the Senedd declared a **nature emergency** recognising that continued and drastic biodiversity loss is a clear sign of a global crisis. The **Wales Summary** for the **State of Nature 2023** makes the stark statement that **Wales is now one of the most nature depleted countries on Earth.**

The **State of Nature Partnership** is a collaboration of over 60 partners, from conservation NGOs, research institutes, and statutory nature conservation bodies. The first UK State of Nature report was published in 2013 and although the last decade has seen continued research and nature recovery action, the most recent report continues to show substantial declines in biodiversity. The headlines from the 2023 summary include 18% of species assessed in Wales are threatened with extinction. That's over 600 species. There has been an average decline of 20% in species abundance since 1994, and the distribution of species and composition of our flora and fauna is changing.

We have local evidence of the nature emergency. The **Greater Gwent State of Nature** was published in 2021, and used existing data to analyse the status and trends of species within the Greater Gwent area. The report analysed individual species and groups of species representing over 500 individual species, presented as 100 different stories of these species and species groups. Of all the species and species groups analysed, 34% of species showed a decline in their numbers or are predicted to continue to decline. Only 12% showed stable populations. Twenty-one percent showed a welcome increase in their numbers, but the remaining 21% did not have enough data to describe the population trends.

Figure 10: Percentage of species or species groups identified as decreasing, increasing, stable or unknown in the Greater Gwent State of Nature



2.1. DRIVERS OF CHANGE

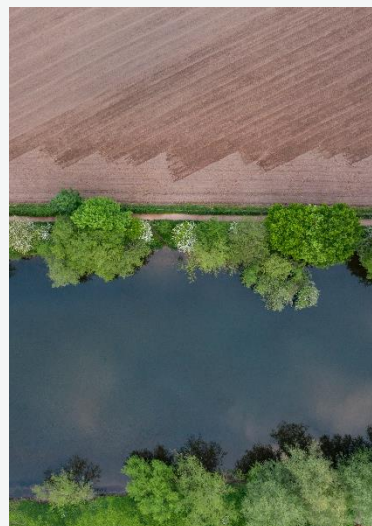
The **IPBES (the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)** has identified five direct drivers of global biodiversity loss (changing use of sea and land, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution, invasive non-native species) and two indirect drivers (people's disconnect with nature, lack of value and importance for nature), published in the **Global Assessment for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** in 2019.

In the same year, the State of Nature Partnership published their **third report** on the condition of UK nature which focussed on identifying the pressures acting on nature in the UK. The drivers identified in the UK are agricultural land management, climate change, freshwater management (or hydrological changes), invasive non-native species (including pests and diseases), fisheries, woodland management, pollution and urbanisation. The fourth State of Nature report (2023) provided an update on the two biggest threats in the UK only, i.e. agricultural land management and climate change.

Box 3. Drivers of Biodiversity Loss

Agricultural Land Management

Farmland ecosystems are hugely important for food production, but the drive for increasing yields has led to the loss of habitat, degradation of remaining habitat and loss of many species associated with the traditional farmed landscape. Our ecology and landscapes were created by farming; our most species-rich hay meadows developed because of traditional farming techniques. The Gwent Levels were created by draining marsh land for use as farmland. But the industrialisation of farming has resulted in loss of space for wildlife and degradation of remaining habitats.



Climate Change

Global changes in temperature, rainfall and other climatic factors that caused by climate change affect the abundance and distribution of species. Seasonal weather variation disrupts species phenology (timing of seasonal events such as egg laying) and increased extreme weather events can cause catastrophic disruption to populations more frequently. Summer drought can have a significant impact on the growth and survival of tree species, leading to major changes in the composition and structure of woodland. As climate change continues we will see change in the species and habitats that can thrive and survive in Monmouthshire.

Box 3. Cont.

Pollution

Pollution can come from many sources and can affect every habitat and ecosystem. One of the most significant ecological issues in Monmouthshire currently is the state of our rivers as a result of pollution. Excess nutrients in rivers cause a process called eutrophication, where algal blooms reduce light and oxygen levels, killing fish and other species. River monitoring targets for phosphates were tightened in 2020 as a result of evidence that nutrients had a negative impact on riverine ecology at much lower levels than originally thought. Additionally, the impact of climate change on rivers (warmer water temperatures and lower water levels) is similar to nutrient enrichment, so the tighter targets were also necessary to counteract the impacts of climate change.



Invasive Non-Native Species

When introduced species have negative impacts on native ecology or are detrimental to human health or economy, they are considered to be Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS). INNS can have adverse impacts on native ecosystems by outcompeting or preying on native species, introducing diseases which native populations have no tolerance to, and hybridisation with native species. The **Wales Biodiversity Partnership Invasive Non-native Species Group** has produced a list of 45 priority species for action. The list includes 16 species to prevent arrival in Wales, 11 more recent introductions to manage before they take hold (of which two have been recorded in Monmouthshire, ruddy duck and sika deer), and 18 species which are well established and require long-term management, all but two of which are found in Monmouthshire.

Pests and Diseases

The biggest current threat from plant pathogens is **ash dieback** caused by *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (previously known as *Chalara fraxinea*).

Although the 2019 data available to the Greater Gwent State of Nature reported only eight records in the whole of Gwent, we know it had taken hold across the county by then and is now ubiquitous in towns and woodlands alike.

Loss of ash from our landscape is not only a tragic loss in itself but will have a consequent negative impact on ash dependent species of fungi and invertebrates. Management of the problem will result in the release of carbon into the atmosphere as diseased trees are removed for health and safety reasons.



2.2. POSITIVE CHANGE

Although the situation is grave, there is reason to be hopeful for recovery. Nature recovery is embedded into **Future Wales National Plan**, and Welsh Government have been clear that the nature crisis should be given parity with the climate emergency. We still have work to do to make this a reality, but the basis for action is clear.

Box 4. A selection of positive actions

Regenerative Farming

There is a growing interest and uptake in regenerative farming practices nationally and locally. Regenerative farming, or regenerative agriculture, can apply to any farming methods which aim to improve the environment whilst producing crops or livestock. The primary goal is to improve soil health, to not only facilitate crop production but also recognising the role of healthy soils in water quality, climate change and human health. The primary themes of regenerative farming are: keeping the soil covered, keeping living roots in the soil, minimising soil disturbance, growing a wide variety of crops, and including livestock in the system.



Natural Flood Management

A key priority of the **National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales** is to deliver more natural interventions and catchment approaches to help improve environmental, social, and economic resilience. This includes working with natural processes and green infrastructure to “reduce flood and coastal erosion risk by implementing measures that help to protect, restore and emulate the natural functions of catchments, floodplains, rivers and the coast”, defined as Natural Flood Management (NFM). Examples of NFM include interventions such as tree planting, in-stream obstructions, soil and land management, and creation of new wetlands.

Ecological Network Mapping

Natural Resources Wales with Gwent Green Grid Partnership are undertaking mapping Resilient Ecological Networks (RENS) and Priority Ecological Networks (PENs) across South East Wales; the process interrogates how different stakeholders could co-operate to achieve multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Gwent Green Grid have created **Gwent Resilient Ecological Network Mapper**, and online portal to map out a Nature Recovery Network for Gwent. The map identifies existing natural resources and potential areas for improvement, where efforts are best directed.



3. DELIVERY OF THE LOCAL NRAP

The success of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP will depend on collaboration and long-term commitment of the Monmouthshire LNP. By working together our efforts can be maximised, making the most of our collective knowledge, skills, and experience and allowing us to respond to any opportunities for partnership working as and when they arise.

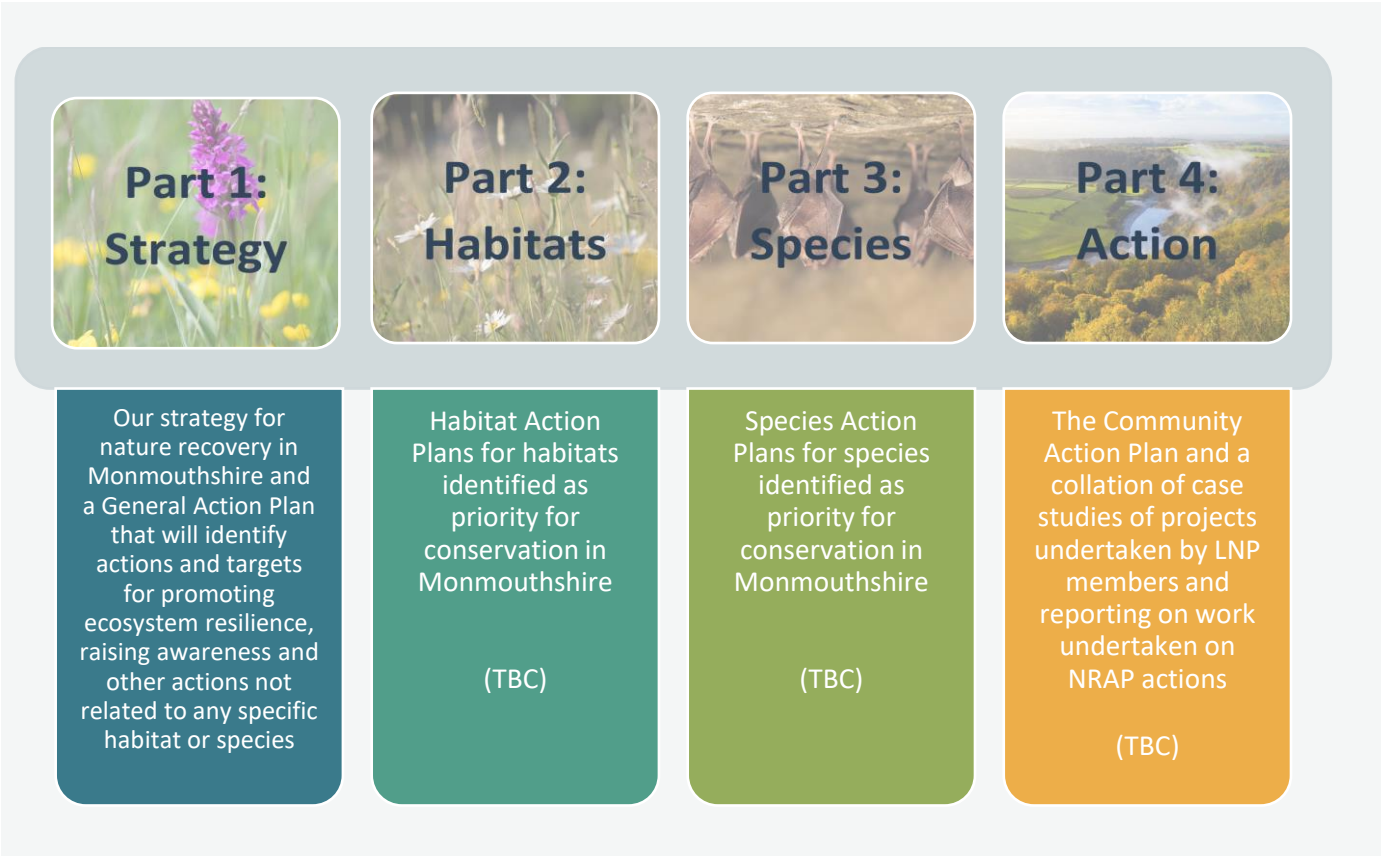
The way actions are delivered will vary. Some actions may be delivered by one partner and others by partners working collaboratively. All partners can contribute to delivery of the Local NRAP whether they are a large organisation, small community group, or an individual.

3.1. CONTENT OF THE LOCAL NRAP

The Monmouthshire Local NRAP will comprise four parts as described in Figure 11 and will focus on habitats and species that are national priorities for conservation and are locally important. Priority habitats recorded in Monmouthshire are given in **Appendix 3** and priority species in **Appendix 4**.

As lead partner, LNP coordinators hosted by Monmouthshire County Council are responsible for editing and collating the content of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP. Partners are encouraged to contribute and develop action plans for species or habitats within their field of interest. Action Plans will be reviewed and approved by a working group of LNP members before being published.

Figure 11: Content of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP



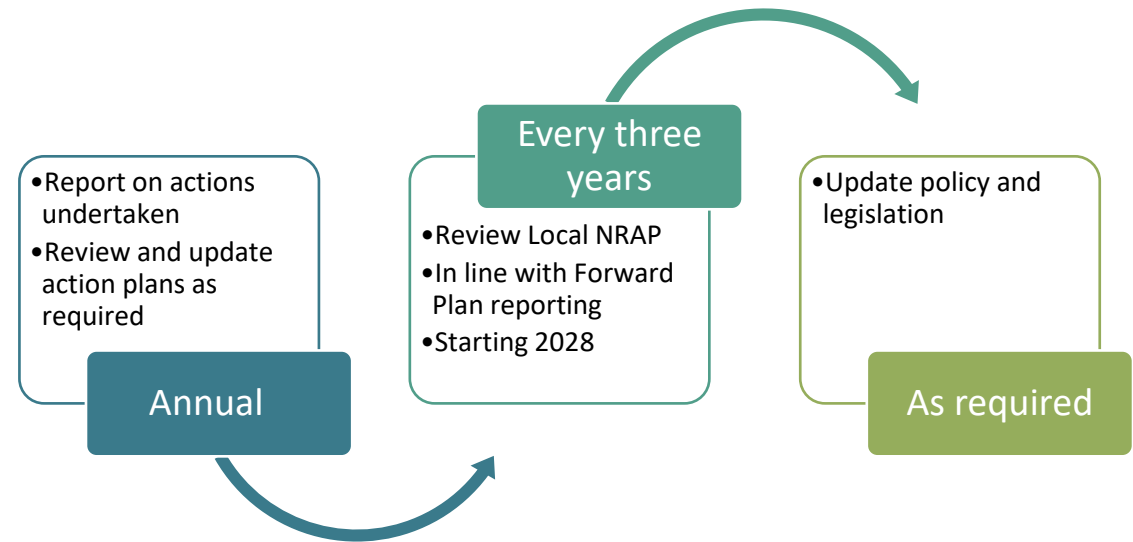
3.2. MONITORING AND REVIEW

A key feature of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP is that it is flexible and adaptable. The actions plans are published separately to enable continual additions, review, and updates.

The number of Habitat and Species Action Plans will be added to depending on the availability of funding and the level of contributions from our partners. Existing plans will be reviewed annually by the Local NRAP working group so actions can be added to or removed in response to updates in local species and habitat information. The working group will report back to LNP following the annual review.

The **General Action Plan** will be part of the annual review. The supporting text of this Part of the Local NRAP will be updated with regards to resources, policy, legislation at minimum once every five years.

Figure 12. Review schedule



4. GENERAL ACTION PLAN

The General Action Plan provides a set of actions not related to a specific habitat or species that have been identified as local priorities to deliver nature recovery in Monmouthshire.

Actions are numbered for reference only; numbers do not relate to priority level or the order in which actions will be delivered. The NRAP for Wales and Greater Gwent NRAP objectives that each action contributes to is given in **Appendix 5**.

Table 1: General Action Plan

	Action
Polices, Plans and Procedures	
G1.1	Embed evidence-led nature positive decision making at all levels and advocate for changes that support ecosystem resilience and nature recovery.
G1.2	Ensure measures to address nature recovery and maximise biodiversity opportunities are embedded into all partners plans and policies.
G1.3	Provide a strong and functioning Local Nature Partnership to act as an interface between local and national delivery partners and Welsh Government.
G1.4	Implement a programme of monitoring and reporting on progress achieved through the Local NRAP, including revising actions as new evidence and policies become available.
Education and Awareness	
G2.1	Develop a website/other web-based presence for the LNP to promote nature recovery activities and key messages, and provide and maintain a list of actions suitable for individuals and communities to take action for nature recovery.
G2.2	Engage with communities, schools, businesses, landowners and town and community councils to promote understanding of biodiversity in their area and work together to encourage appropriate management and actions to achieve nature recovery.
G2.3	Promote and support training events to collaboratively deliver a programme of nature and green skills training
Evidence and Understanding	
G3.1	Compile and maintain an inventory of previous, current and planned nature recovery action projects and data, to identify potential overlaps and opportunities for collaboration.
G3.2	Ensure all survey and monitoring data captured by Monmouthshire LNP members is submitted to SEWBRcC.
G3.3	Create a list of locally important species and habitats for Monmouthshire and a programme for recording and monitoring their status
G3.4	Support and improve monitoring, surveying, recording and mapping of locally important habitats and species, invasive species and ecosystem resilience indicators, including volunteer and citizen science schemes
G3.5	Support development of resilient ecological network maps to establish a baseline for ecosystem resilience planning and identify opportunities for nature recovery
Promoting Ecosystem Resilience	
G4.1	Encourage collaborative action between LNP members and with neighbouring LNPs, including project development, funding, and participation in landscape scale or national project.
G4.2	Promote and support the use of nature based solutions and identify suitable areas for providing nature based solutions in Monmouthshire.

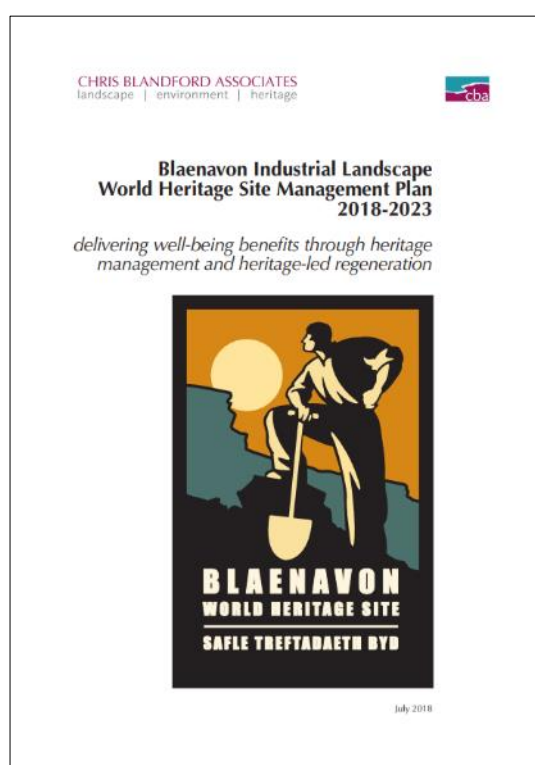
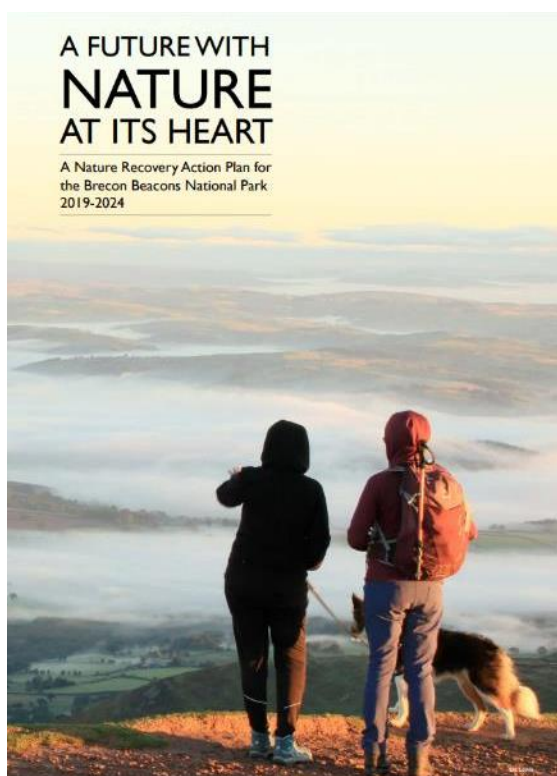
5. SIGNPOSTING

We don't want to duplicate efforts where we don't need to, so for some habitats and species we direct people towards action plans created by partners working locally or wider afield but still applicable in our area. Where habitats and species have been identified as priorities in the Monmouthshire LNP area, we will aim to review partners action plans and identify local actions which can contribute to them as appropriate.

5.1. BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG NATIONAL PARK

The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park has its own Local Nature Partnership which produced a Local NRAP published in 2019 and is currently reviewing the actions for next issue. The BBNP Local NRAP is intended to guide nature recovery efforts within the National Park, as one part of the jigsaw to deliver an Ecosystem Approach. The Monmouthshire Local NRAP will identify actions that enable cross border working and collaboration with the Bannau Brycheiniog LNP but activities within the park area should be guided by their Local NRAP.

Partners working in the BBNP should also be aware of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) Management Plan. Many of the actions in the plan which are designed to protect the features of the WHS will also have positive impacts for biodiversity and nature recovery, such as reducing damaging activities like off-roading.



5.2. GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST'S TEN VULNERABLE SPECIES

Gwent Wildlife Trust set their 2030 goal to recover ten vulnerable species in Gwent, reasoning that by spotlighting a small number of species action can be targeted and the impact better measured. The species were chosen as they are threatened in Gwent and also action for the chosen species would benefit other species in the varied counties across Gwent. Action plans have been created for the following species:



Adder*



Barn owl



Dipper



Grayling



Hedgehog



Nightjar



Pine marten



Pink waxcap



Shrill carder bee*



Water vole*

All the species have been recorded in Monmouthshire, although for some species the records are historic or unconfirmed. Asterisked species were also identified as priorities in Monmouthshire by LNP members.

5.3. WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The Wye Valley National Landscape is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which covers parts of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire. The **AONB Management Plan** sets out the vision for the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the priorities for its management. The forthcoming Wye Valley National Landscape's Nature Recovery Plan will focus on habitats identified as Special Qualities of the protected landscape, their current extent, condition and aims and objective for nature recovery in each.

The **Priority Species Project** has produced five Species Action Plans for species or assemblage of species related to key habitats in the Wye Valley.



**Bumblebee
Assemblage**



Hedgehog



**Noble Chafer
Beetle**



**Woodland
Butterflies**



**Water
Crowfoot**

The key habitats associated with each species groups are:

- Assemblage of bumblebees and species rich grassland
- Hedgehog and boundary features such as hedgerows and dry-stone walls
- Noble chafer beetle and traditional orchards
- Woodland butterfly assemblage and woodland
- Water crowfoot and watercourses, i.e. the River Wye and it's tributaries

APPENDIX 1: POLICY AND LEGISLATION

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is concerned with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a duty on public bodies listed in the Act to carry out sustainable development. To do this public bodies are required to work towards the following seven well-being goals:



All public bodies listed in the Act must set up and publish well-being objectives. The Act has also established Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. Their role is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area by strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales.

An annual Well-being of Wales report The Future Generations commissioner publishes an annual report which summarises progress with reference to a set of 46 national indicator, including (43) area of healthy ecosystem and (44) the status of biodiversity in Wales.

THE ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 puts in place the legislation needed to plan and manage Wales' natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way.

BIODIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE OF ECOSYSTEMS DUTY

Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (Section 6 Duty) for public bodies. The duty requires that public bodies must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (SMNR) FRAMEWORK

Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out Wales' approach to planning and managing natural resources at a national and local level with a general purpose linked to statutory Principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) defined within the Act.

There are three main components to the associated SMNR framework:

Part 1: The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)

The Report (produced by Natural Resources Wales, NRW) sets out the state of Wales' natural resources. It assesses the extent to which natural resources in Wales are being sustainably managed, and recommends a proactive approach to building resilience. For the first time the Report links the resilience of Welsh natural resources to the well-being of the people of Wales.

Part 2: Natural Resources Policy (NRP)

Produced by Welsh Government, it sets out the priorities, risks and opportunities for managing natural resources sustainably. The Policy takes into account the findings of the State of Natural Resources Report. The focus of the NRP is the sustainable management of Wales' natural resources, to maximise their contribution to achieving goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The policy sets out the following three National Priorities:

- Delivering nature-based solutions,
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency,
- Taking a place-based approach

Part 3: Area Statements

Area Statements will translate the high level strategic priorities while taking account of local need, opportunities and pressures, such as listed in this NRAP. An area profile will identify potential opportunities and priorities at a local level and possible collaboration opportunities for different bodies to work. Monmouthshire is in the South East Wales Area Statement area which takes a landscape approach to working, recognising the special and distinct landscape profiles of the area.

APPENDIX 2: PROTECTED SITES

The protected site network is made of sites designated under several different legislations and mechanisms. Sites which are nationally or internally important are designated as “statutory” designations. Locally important sites do not have the same statutory protection, but a vital components of ecosystem health and resilience.

Table 2: Protected Site Designations

Type of Designation	Details
<p>Ramsar Site</p> <p><i>The Convention on Wetlands 1971</i></p>	<p>Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated following the Convention on Wetlands signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. All are designated as SSSI as well and through that are legally protected against damaging activities.</p> <p>The Severn Estuary is designated as a Ramsar site for estuarine habitat, assemblages of migratory fish species and internationally important populations of waterfowl.</p>
<p>Special Protection Area (SPA)</p> <p><i>Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019</i></p>	<p>Internationally important sites for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). There is a legal duty to manage and monitor SPA sites. All are designated as SSSI as well and through that are legally protected against damaging activities.</p> <p>The Severn Estuary SPA is one of the most important estuaries in the UK for overwintering wildfowl and waders, especially when severe weather conditions affect sites further north and east. The Estuary regularly supports over 20,000 wintering wildfowl, with over 80,000 individual waterfowls recorded in the winter seasons.</p>
<p>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</p> <p><i>Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019</i></p>	<p>Sites which support internationally important habitats or species populations are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). There is a legal duty to manage and monitor SAC sites. All are designated as SSSI as well and through that are legally protected against damaging activities.</p> <p>There are five SACs in Monmouthshire. The Severn Estuary is designated as one of the largest coastal plain estuaries in Europe, with a classic funnel shaper and one of the highest tidal ranges in the world. Together with the Ramsar and SPA designations the site is known as the Severn Estuary European Marine Site.</p> <p>The Rivers Usk and Wye SACs are both designated as watercourses which support migratory and non-migratory fish, as well as otter and water crowfoot habitat.</p> <p>The Wye Valley Woodlands SAC comprises over 900 ha of mixed ash, beech and yew woodlands, on both Welsh and English representing the western-most range of most of the woodland types recorded.</p> <p>The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC is another cross border SAC the protects an internationally important network of lesser and greater horseshoe bat roosts. In Monmouthshire there are four roosts which include the only known greater horseshoe maternity roost in Wales.</p>
<p>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</p>	<p>Sites which support habitats or species population of national importance are designated as Sites of Species Scientific Interest. Some sites are also designated for geological reasons. Activities which are likely to damage a SSSI require consent from the relevant nature conservation body.</p>

Type of Designation	Details
<i>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000</i>	There are 67 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including nine sites designated for the species they support, 20 woodland SSSIs and 11 designated for species-rich or ancient grassland. The full breakdown of SSSI types is given in Figure 8.
National Nature Reserve (NNR) <i>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</i>	National Nature Reserves are designated by the relevant nature conservation body. They are all nationally important sites designated as SSSIs which are also open to the public (with some exceptions). There are two National Nature Reserves in Monmouthshire; Fiddlers Elbow and Upper Wye Gorge, both of which are part of Wye Valley Woodlands SAC
Local Nature Reserve (LNR) <i>National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949</i>	Local Nature Reserve sites are designated by the council. There is no legal protection as a result of the LNR designation but they are usually protected by management agreements and local plans. Cleddon Bog SSSI is designated as Local Nature Reserve in Monmouthshire.
Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) <i>Not a statutory designation</i>	Local Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation have substantive nature conservation value and play a critical role in conservation, but have no legal protection. National and local planning policy provides some protection against development, and recent updates to Planning Policy Wales have strengthened the commitment to protect locally designated sites and irreplaceable habitats. At time of publication there are 782 sites designated as SINCs identified in Monmouthshire LPA predominantly in relation to grassland and ancient and semi-natural woodland. Gwent Wildlife Trust identify new sites each year so this number is subject to change.

APPENDIX 3: PRIORITY HABITATS IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

The habitats in the following table are habitats listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 that are known to occur within Monmouthshire. We have used data sets available on Data Map Wales and designated site citations to inform the list.

Table 3: Priority Habitats in Monmouthshire

Habitats	Cynefin	Priority Habitats	Cynefin sy'n Flaenoriaeth
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	Coedwig lydanddail, gymysgac ywen	Traditional orchards	Perllannau traddodiadol
		Wood pasture & parkland	Porfa goediog a pharcdir
		Lowland beech and yew woodland	Coedwig ffawydd ac ywenar dir isel
		Wet woodland	Coedwig wlyb
		Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Coedwig gollddail gymysgar dir isel
Boundary and linear features	Coedwig lydanddail, gymysgac ywen	Hedgerows	Gwrychoedd
Improved grassland	Glaswelltir wedi ei wella	Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Tir pori corslyd ar forfaarfordirol a gorlifdir
Neutral grassland	Glaswelltir niwtral	Lowland meadows	Gweirgloddiau yr iseldir
Calcareous grassland	Glaswelltir calchaid	Lowland calcareous grassland	Glaswelltir calchaid yriseldir
Acid grassland	Glaswelltir asidaidd	Lowland dry acid grassland	Glaswelltir asidaidd sychiseldir
Dwarf shrub heath	Gweundir o gorlwyni	Lowland heathland	Gweundir yr iseldir
Fen, marsh and swamp	Ffen, cors a chors siglennaidd	Lowland fens	Ffeniau ar dir isel
		Reedbeds	Gwelyau cyrs
Bogs	Corsydd	Lowland raised bog	Cyforgors ar dir isel
Rivers and Streams	Afonydd a nentydd	Rivers	Afonydd
Standing open waters and canals	Dŵr llonydd agored a chamlesi	Ponds	Pyllau dŵr
Inland rock	Craig fewndirol	Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land	Brithwaith o gynefinoeddagored ar dir a oedd cynt wedi ei ddatblygu
Supralittoral rock	Craig uwch-lanw	Maritime cliff and slopes	Clogwyni a llethrau arforol

APPENDIX 4: PRIORITY SPECIES IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

The species in the following table have all been recorded in Monmouthshire and are listed as priority species on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The list and dates are from data provided by SEWBRc in May 2025.

Table 4: Priority Species in Monmouthshire

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Mammals	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	European Water Vole	Llygod Pengrwn y Dwr	1959	2024
	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Western Barbastelle	Ystlum Du	2010	2024
	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	West European Hedgehog	Draenog	1964	2025
	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Brown Hare	Ysgyfarnog	1959	2023
	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	European Otter	Dyfrgi	1958	2025
	<i>Martes martes</i>	Pine Marten	Bele	1939	2024
	<i>Micromys minutus</i>	Harvest Mouse	Llygod yr Yd	1968	2024
	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Hazel Dormouse	Pathew	1905	2024
	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	Polecat	Ffwlbart	1952	2024
	<i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Bechstein's Bat	Ystlum Bechstein	2011	2024
	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Noctule Bat	Ystlum Mawr	1959	2024
	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common Pipistrelle	Ystlum Cyffredin	1970	2025
	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle	Ystlum Lleiaf	1996	2024
	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown Long-eared Bat	Ystlum Hirglust	1969	2024
	<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	Greater Horseshoe Bat	Ystlum Pedol Mwyaf	1910	2025
	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	Ystlum Pedol Lleiaf	1950	2025
Birds	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	Lesser Redpoll	Llinos Bengoch	1960	2024
	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Eurasian Skylark	Ehedydd	1936	2025
	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	White-fronted Goose	Gwydd Dalcen-Wen	1963	2021
	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Tree Pipit	Corhedydd y Coed	1961	2024
	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Eurasian Bittern	Adar y Bwn	1985	2024

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
	<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>	Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Gŵydd Ddu Fol-dywyll	1987	2023
	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Nightjar	Troellwr Mawr	1959	2024
	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Common Ringed Plover	Cwtiad Torchog	1971	2024
	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull	Gwylan benddu	1922	2024
	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Hen Harrier	Boda Tinwyn	1975	2024
	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Hawfinch	Gylfinbraff	1900	2024
	<i>Crex crex</i>	Corncrake	Rhegen yr Yd	1973	1981
	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Cuckoo	Cog	1959	2024
	<i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	Bewick's Swan	Alarch Bewick	1960	2019
	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Cnocell Fraith Leiaf	1959	2024
	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Corn Bunting	Bras yr Yd	1973	2006
	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer	Bras Melyn	1961	2024
	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Common Reed Bunting	Bras y Cyrs	1965	2024
	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Kestrel	Cudyll Coch	1959	2025
	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	European Pied Flycatcher	Gwybedog Brith	1959	2024
	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Red Grouse	Grugiar Goch	1951	2024
	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European Herring Gull	Gwylan y Penwaig	1958	2024
	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	Rhostog Coch	1971	2024
	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Linnet	Llinos	1964	2025
	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Grasshopper Warbler	Troellwr Bach	1900	2024
	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Woodlark	Ehedydd y Coed	1985	2019
	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Common Scoter	Mor-Hwyaden Ddu	1971	2020
	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Western Yellow Wagtail	Siglen Felen	1959	2024
	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	Gwybedog Mannog	1961	2024
	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Curlew	Gylfinir	1959	2025
	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Adar y To	1957	2025

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Birds cont.	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Tree Sparrow	Golfan y Mynydd	1961	2023
	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey Partridge	Petris	1959	2024
	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Wood Warbler	Telur y Coed	1961	2024
	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Golden Plover	Cwtiad Aur	1901	2023
	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	Willow Tit	Titw'r Helyg	1980	2023
	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Marsh Tit	Titw'r Wern	1961	2024
	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock	Llwyd y Gwrych	1961	2025
	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Eurasian Bullfinch	Coch y Berllan	1961	2025
	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Turtle Dove	Turtur	1959	2021
	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Starling	Drudwen	1931	2025
	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	Bronfraith	1958	2025
	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Ring Ouzel	Mwyalchen y Mynydd	1958	2025
	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Lapwing	Cornchwiglen	1959	2025
Reptiles and Amphibians	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Slow-worm	Nadroedd Defaid	1956	2024
	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Common Toad	Llyffant Dafadennog	1976	2025
	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	Grass Snake	Nadroedd y Gwair	1958	2024
	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Great Crested Newt	Madfall Ddwr Gribog	1960	2025
	<i>Vipera berus</i>	Adder	Gwiber	1963	2024
	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Common Lizard	Madfall	1956	2024
Fish	<i>Alosa alosa</i>	Allis Shad	Herlod	1964	1964
	<i>Alosa fallax</i>	Twaite Shad	Gwangen	1991	2023
	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	European Eel	Llysywen	1959	2023
	<i>Gadus morhua</i>	Atlantic Cod	Penfras	1981	1981
	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	Lampern	Llysywen Bendoll yr Afon	1975	2011
	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	Sea Lamprey	Llysywen Bendoll y Môr	1963	2023
	<i>Raja clavata</i>	Roker	Morgath Styds	1970	2017

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
	<i>Salmo salar</i>	Atlantic Salmon	Eog	1962	2024
	<i>Salmo trutta</i>	Brown/Sea Trout	Brithyll	1964	2023
Butterflies and Moths	<i>Acronicta psi</i>	Grey Dagger	Bidog Llwyd	1912	2024
	<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	Knot Grass	Bidog Tafol	1966	2024
	<i>Adscita statices</i>	Forester	Coediwr	1982	2015
	<i>Agonopterix atomella</i>	Greenweed Flat-body		1977	1977
	<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>	Beaded Chestnut	Castan Leiniog	1912	2024
	<i>Allophyes oxyacanthae</i>	Green-brindled Crescent	Cilgant Brych	1962	2024
	<i>Amphipoea oculea</i>	Ear Moth	Clustwyfyn Llygeidiog	1973	2022
	<i>Amphipyra tragopoginis</i>	Mouse Moth		1960	2023
	<i>Anania funebris</i>	White-spotted Sable		1966	1982
	<i>Anchoscelis helvola</i>	Flounced Chestnut	Castan Grech	1965	2020
	<i>Anchoscelis litura</i>	Brown-spot Pinion	Castan Smotyn Brown	1966	2023
	<i>Apamea remissa</i>	Dusky Brocade	Brithion Llwydolau	1961	2024
	<i>Arctia caja</i>	Garden Tiger	Teigr yr Ardd	1964	2024
	<i>Asteroscopus sphinx</i>	Sprawler	Cwcwll Bwaog	1965	2023
	<i>Atethmia centrigo</i>	Centre-barred Sallow	Melyn yr Ynn	1935	2024
	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Britheg Berlog	1906	2019
	<i>Boloria selene</i>	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Britheg Berlog Fach	1906	2023
	<i>Brachylomia viminalis</i>	Minor Shoulder-knot	Gwarglymau Bach	1967	2021
	<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	Mottled Rustic	Gwladwr Brith	1966	2024
	<i>Celaena haworthii</i>	Haworth's Minor	Gwyfyn Plu'r Gweunydd	2013	2013
	<i>Ceramica pisi</i>	Broom Moth	Gwyfyn Banadl	1966	2024
	<i>Chesias legatella</i>	Streak	Rhesen y Banadl	1962	2023
	<i>Chesias rufata</i>	Broom-tip	Rhesen Gam	1967	2023
	<i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	Latticed Heath	Seffyr Delltog	1968	2023

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Butterflies and Moths cont.	<i>Cirrhia gilvago</i>	Dusky-lemon Sallow	Melyn y Llwyf	1966	2019
	<i>Cirrhia icteritia</i>	Sallow	Melyn Penfelyn	1966	2023
	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Small Heath	Gweirlöyn Bach y Waun	1906	2024
	<i>Cossus cossus</i>	Goat Moth	Gwyfyn Drewllyd	1971	2019
	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	Small Blue	Gleision Bach	2007	2023
	<i>Cymatophorina diluta</i>	Oak Lutestring	Tannau'r Deri	1971	2020
	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square-spot	Smotiau Sgwar Bach	1912	2024
	<i>Diloba caeruleocephala</i>	Figure of Eight	Crwbach Ffigwr Wyth	1963	2024
	<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>	Small Phoenix	Ffenics Bach	1912	2024
	<i>Ennomos erosaria</i>	September Thorn	Carpiog Medi	1969	2024
	<i>Ennomos fuscantaria</i>	Dusky Thorn	Carpiog Tywyll	1966	2024
	<i>Ennomos quercinaria</i>	August Thorn	Carpiog Awst	1966	2024
	<i>Entephria caesiata</i>	Grey Mountain Carpet	Brychan Llwyd y Mynydd	1984	1999
	<i>Epirrhoe galiata</i>	Galium Carpet	Brychan y Friwydd	1984	2010
	<i>Eriopygodes imbecilla</i>	Silurian	Gwyfyn Gwent	1999	2023
	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	Dingy Skipper	Gwibiwr Llwyd	1906	2024
	<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Autumnal Rustic	Gwladwr yr Hydref	1966	2023
	<i>Eulithis mellinata</i>	Spinach	Brychan Cwrens	1967	2024
	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	Marsh Fritillary	Britheg y Gors	1935	1994
	<i>Euxoa nigricans</i>	Garden Dart	Dart y Gerddi	1972	2019
	<i>Fabriciana adippe</i>	High Brown Fritillary	Britheg Frown	1905	1989
	<i>Graphiphora augur</i>	Double Dart	Dart Deunod	1967	2019
	<i>Helotropha leucostigma</i>	Crescent	Clustwyfyn Cilgantog	1974	2023
	<i>Hemaris tityus</i>	Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth	Gwalch-Wyfyn Gwenynaid Ymyl Gul	1933	1933
	<i>Hemistola chrysoprasaria</i>	Small Emerald	Emrallt Barf yr Hen Wr	1967	2024
	<i>Hepialus humuli</i>	Ghost Moth	Chwimwyfyn Rhithiol	1963	2023

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Butterflies and Moths cont.	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>	Grayling	Gwerlöyn Llwyd	1941	2024
	<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	Rustic	Llwyd Llyfn	1966	2024
	<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	Gwladwr Gwridog	1966	2024
	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Wall	Gweirlöyn y cloddiau	1906	2024
	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	Wood White	Gwyn y Coed	1935	2022
	<i>Leucania comma</i>	Shoulder-striped Wainscot	Gwensgod Gwar Rhesog	1966	2024
	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>	White Admiral	Mantell Wen	1952	2024
	<i>Litoligia literosa</i>	Rosy Minor	Corachod Gwridog	1967	2022
	<i>Lycia hirtaria</i>	Brindled Beauty	Rhisgl Brith	1965	2025
	<i>Macaria wauaria</i>	V-Moth	Seffyr y Ffyrch	1966	1990
	<i>Malacosoma neustria</i>	Lackey	Gwaswyfyn	1960	2024
	<i>Melanchra persicariae</i>	Dot Moth	Gwyfyn Dotiog	1963	2024
	<i>Melanthia procellata</i>	Pretty Chalk Carpet	Brychan Hardd y Calch	1966	2023
	<i>Minoa murinata</i>	Drab Looper	Dolennwr Llwydfelyn	1911	2024
	<i>Mniotype adusta</i>	Dark Brocade	Pali Tywyll	1970	2022
	<i>Noctua orbona</i>	Lunar Yellow Underwing	Isadain Felen Loerol	2019	2019
	<i>Orthonama vittata</i>	Oblique Carpet	Brychan Lletraws	1966	2022
	<i>Orthosia gracilis</i>	Powdered Quaker	Crynwr Llychlyd	1967	2024
	<i>Perizoma albulata</i>	Grass Rivulet	Gwregys y Gwair	1967	2024
	<i>Plebejus argus</i>	Silver-studded Blue	Gleision Serennog	2015	2015
	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	Grizzled Skipper	Gwibiwr Brith	1906	2024
	<i>Rheumaptera hastata</i>	Argent & Sable	Brychan Pennau Saethau	1991	2004
	<i>Rhizedra lutosa</i>	Large Wainscot	Gwelltwyfyn Mawr	1967	2023
	<i>Sabra harpagula</i>	Scarce Hook-tip	Bachadain Brin	1961	2023
	<i>Satyrium w-album</i>	White-letter Hairstreak	Brithribin W Wen	1876	2024
	<i>Scopula marginepunctata</i>	Mullein Wave	Ton Arfor	2005	2020

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Butterflies and Moths cont.	<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	Shaded Broad-bar	Rhesen Lydan Dywyll	1967	2024
	<i>Sideridis reticulata</i>	Bordered Gothic	Rhwyl Ymylog	1892	1892
	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	White Ermine	Ermin Gwyn	1935	2024
	<i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	Buff Ermine	Ermin Llwydfelyn	1935	2024
	<i>Stilbia anomala</i>	Anomalous	Llwyd Gloyw	1968	2022
	<i>Synanthedon scoliaeformis</i>	Welsh Clearwing	Cliradain Gymreig	2015	2022
	<i>Thecla betulae</i>	Brown Hairstreak	Brithribin Brown	1983	2024
	<i>Tholera cespitis</i>	Hedge Rustic	Rhwyl y Crawcwellt	1912	2023
	<i>Tholera decimalis</i>	Feathered Gothic	Rhwyl Bluog	1966	2024
	<i>Timandra comae</i>	Blood-vein		1966	2024
	<i>Trichiura crataegi</i>	Pale Eggar	Wylun Gwelw	1966	2020
	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Cinnabar	Teigr y Benfelen	1968	2024
	<i>Watsonalla binaria</i>	Oak Hook-tip	Bachadain y Deri	1937	2024
	<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet	Brychan Deusmotiog Tywyll	1966	2024
	<i>Xestia agathina</i>	Heath Rustic	Clai'r Rhos	1986	2020
	<i>Xestia castanea</i>	Neglected Rustic	Clai'r Waun	1973	2012
	<i>Xylena exsoleta</i>	Sword-grass	Cleddwyfyn Cyffredin	1892	1892
Bees, Wasps, Ants and Sawflies	<i>Bombus humilis</i>	Brown-banded Carder-bee	Cardwenynen Lwydfrown	1970	2024
	<i>Bombus muscorum</i>	Moss Carder-bee	Cardwenynen y Mwsogl	2019	2019
	<i>Bombus ruderarius</i>	Red-shanked Carder-bee	Cardwenynen Goesgoch	1997	2014
	<i>Bombus sylvarum</i>	Shrill Carder Bee	Cardwenynen Feinlais	2003	2024
	<i>Chrysis fulgida</i>	Shimmering Ruby-tail		2020	2020
	<i>Eucera longicornis</i>	Long-horned Bee	Gwenynen Hirgorn	1922	2024
	<i>Formicoxenus nitidulus</i>	Shining Guest Ant		1995	1995

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Other Invertebrates	<i>Asilus crabroniformis</i>	Hornet robberfly	Pryf Lladd	1959	2023
	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	Freshwater Crayfish	Cimwch yr Afon	1900	2024
	<i>Baetis niger</i>	Southern Iron Blue		1975	2014
	<i>Bembidion quadripustulatum</i>	Scarce Four-dot Pin-palp		1997	2012
	<i>Bembidion testaceum</i>	Pale Pin-palp	Chwilen y Traeth	1977	2015
	<i>Brachyptera putata</i>	Northern February Red	Pryf Coch y Cerrig	1983	2001
	<i>Calosoma inquisitor</i>	Caterpillar-hunter		2002	2002
	<i>Carabus monilis</i>	Necklace Ground Beetle		1985	2023
	<i>Clorismia rustica</i>	Southern Silver Stiletto-fly	Pryf Pigfain Arian	1906	2005
	<i>Empis limata</i>	English Assassin Fly		2002	2002
	<i>Lipsothrix nervosa</i>	Southern Yellow Splinter	Pryfyn Teiliwr Melyn	1968	2007
	<i>Lipsothrix nobilis</i>	Scarce Yellow Splinter		2005	2005
	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	Stag Beetle	Chwilen Gorniog	1961	2022
	<i>Meloe proscarabaeus</i>	Black Oil-beetle	Chwilen Olew Ddu	1971	2024
	<i>Meloe rugosus</i>	Rugged Oil-beetle	Chwilen Olew Garw	2006	2022
	<i>Meloe violaceus</i>	Violet Oil-beetle	Chwilen Olew Fioled	2015	2025
	<i>Meotica anglica</i>	Shingle Rove Beetle		1998	1998
	<i>Monocephalus castaneipes</i>	Broad Groove-head Spider		1985	1998
	<i>Odhneripisidium tenuilineatum</i>	Fine-lined Pea Mussel	Misglen	1965	2003
	<i>Potamanthus luteus</i>	Yellow Mayfly	Cleren Fai Melyn	1954	2024
	<i>Pseudanodonta complanata</i>	Depressed River Mussel	Misglen yr Afon	1955	2007
	<i>Rhabdomastix japonica</i>	River-shore Crane-fly		1972	1997
	<i>Saaristoa firma</i>	Triangle Hammock-spider		2000	2000
	<i>Synaptus filiformis</i>	Hairy Click Beetle	Chwilen Glic Blewog	1852	2003

Species Group	Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
Plants	<i>Anomodon longifolius</i>	Long-leaved Tail-moss	Mwsogl Cynffon Hirddail	1911	2012
	<i>Asplenium trichomanes subsp. pachyrachis</i>	Lobed Maidenhair Spleenwort	Duegredynen Gwallt y Forwyn	1988	2023
	<i>Bupleurum tenuissimum</i>	Slender Hare's-ear	Paladr Trwyddo Eiddildail	1972	2012
	<i>Campanula patula</i>	Spreading Bellflower	Clychlys Lledaenol	1944	2018
	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Cornflower	Glas yr Yd	1991	2024
	<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Helleborine	Caldrist Culddail	1879	2019
	<i>Clinopodium acinos</i>	Basil Thyme	Brenhinllys	2011	2011
	<i>Dianthus armeria</i>	Deptford Pink	Penigan y Porfeydd	1980	1980
	<i>Didymodon tomaculosus</i>	Sausage Beard-moss		2004	2004
	<i>Euphrasia officinalis subsp. anglica</i>	Glandular Eyebright	Effros Chwareog Gwalltog	1985	2022
	<i>Euphrasia officinalis subsp. monticola</i>	Eyebright		1997	2023
	<i>Euphrasia officinalis subsp. pratensis</i>	Eyebright	Effros Blodau Bach Gludiog	1971	2022
	<i>Euphrasia pseudokernerii</i>	Eyebright	Effros y Calch	2003	2012
	<i>Fumaria purpurea</i>	Purple Ramping-fumitory	Mwg y Ddaear Glasgoch	1924	2023
	<i>Galeopsis angustifolia</i>	Red Hemp-nettle	Penboeth Culddail	1983	1983
	<i>Hordeum marinum</i>	Sea Barley	Haid y Morfa	1972	1972
	<i>Hypopitys monotropa</i>	Yellow Bird's-nest	Cyd-Dwf	1845	2021
	<i>Hypopitys monotropa subsp. hypophegea</i>	Bird's-nest		1969	2013
	<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i>	Stag's-horn Clubmoss	Cnwbfwsogl Corn Carw	1980	2016
	<i>Melittis melissophyllum</i>	Bastard Balm	Gwenynog	1977	1977
	<i>Mentha pulegium</i>	Pennyroyal	Brefai	1942	1964
	<i>Oenanthe fistulosa</i>	Tubular Water-dropwort	Cegid Pibellaidd	1965	2022
	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	Fly Orchid	Caineirian yr Ednogyn	1878	1979
	<i>Orthotrichum pumilum</i>	Dwarf Bristle-moss		2011	2011
	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Lesser Butterfly-orchid	Baladr Dwyddeiliog	1878	2011
	<i>Ranunculus arvensis</i>	Corn Buttercup	Blodyn-Ymenyn yr Yd	1973	1981

Species Group		Scientific Name	English Name	Welsh Name	Earliest Record	Latest Record
		<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>	Annual Knawel	Dinodd Blynnyddol	1995	2005
		<i>Sorbus eminens</i>	Round-leaved Whitebeam	Cerddinen Mynwy	1903	2017
		<i>Sorbus leptophylla</i>	Thin-leaved Whitebeam	Cerddinen Gymreig	1950	1988
		<i>Stellaria palustris</i>	Marsh Stitchwort	Serenllys Llwydlas	1982	1983
		<i>Trollius europaeus</i>	Globeflower	Blodeuyn y Gronnell	2011	2024
		<i>Weissia squarrosa</i>	Spreading-leaved Beardless-moss	Mwsogl Diflew Lled-ddail	1992	2011
		<i>Weissia wilsonii</i>	Many-fruited Beardless-moss		1980	2010
Fungi, and Moulds	Lichen Slime	<i>Buglossoporus quercinus</i>	Oak polypore		2006	2006
		<i>Clavaria zollingeri</i>	Violaceous Fairy Club	Cwrel Fioled	2000	2021
		<i>Entoloma bloxamii s. lat.</i>	Big Blue Pinkgill	Tagell Binc Fawr Las	2006	2016
		<i>Microglossum olivaceum agg.</i>	Olive Earthtongue	Tafod Daear Melynwyrd	1998	2016
		<i>Parmelia ernstiae</i>			2016	2016
		<i>Phylloporus pelletieri</i>	Gilled Bolete	Boled Tagell Aur	2017	2017
		<i>Punctelia jeckeri</i>			1986	2023
		<i>Punctelia reddenda</i>			1975	2021
		<i>Pyrenula nitida</i>			1982	1982
		<i>Usnea articulata</i>			2016	2016
		<i>Usnea florida</i>	Witches' Whiskers Lichen		2005	2005

APPENDIX 5: NRAP FOR WALES OBJECTIVES

The following table gives the NRAP for Wales objectives, which are also the Greater Gwent NRAP objectives. .

Table 5: NRAP for Wales Objectives and Local NRAP Actions

NRAP for Wales Objectives		Monmouthshire Local NRAP Actions
1	Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels	G1.1 G1.2
2	Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management	G3.1 G3.3
3	Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degrading habitats and habitat creation	G4.1 G4.2
4	Tackle key pressures on species and habitats	G3.3 G3.4
5	Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring	G2.1 G2.2 G2.3 G3.1 G3.2 G3.3 G3.4 G3.5
6	Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery	G1.3 G1.4

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

April 2024

Executive Summary

KEY MESSAGES

- First published in 2019, the Green Infrastructure Strategy has been reviewed to reflect changes in policy, the new Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy and updated baseline data. The review also reflects progress in delivery of green infrastructure projects over the last 5 years.
- Planning Policy Wales 12 defines Green Infrastructure as 'the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places' (such as towns and villages).
- This Green Infrastructure Strategy promotes an integrated and joined up approach to delivering Green Infrastructure that takes into account the needs of Monmouthshire's communities, environment and economy.
- An important overarching principle underpinning the Strategy is the need to recognise the multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure assets and to maximise the benefits different assets can deliver through an integrated approach. For example, green spaces can be used for sustainable food production, contribute to flood management and provide access to nature for informal recreation. These benefits can support improved health and well being, climate mitigation/adaptation and biodiversity.
- It is essential that the inter-relationship and connections between the individual projects outlined in the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan are considered in the round to ensure that opportunities for shared outcomes and mutual benefits are maximised.



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SETTING THE SCENE

Background

This Strategy sets out Monmouthshire County Council's approach to the planning, management and delivery of Green Infrastructure (GI) focussed around the following strategic objectives and priorities:

- Improve Health & Wellbeing
- Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience
- Support Climate and Nature Resilience
- Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness
- Support Sustainable Economic Development

In doing so, the GI Strategy will help contribute to the delivery of:

- Replacement Local Development Plan
- MCC Community and Corporate Plan
- MCC Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plans
- MCC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan and Action Plan
- MCC Nature Recovery Action Plan
- Public Service Board Wellbeing Plans

Overview of the GI Strategy

The Strategy was prepared by CBA on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council.

Volume 1 – Strategic Framework (this document)

Volume 1 of the Strategy sets out the Council's strategic framework for GI provision in Monmouthshire. It identifies key priorities and strategic opportunities where the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of green features and functions would deliver the most significant benefits, both on a county-wide basis and for locations where growth is planned in the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2018-2033 Preferred Strategy (endorsed October 2023).

As required by Planning Policy Wales, the GI Strategy is informed by a Green Infrastructure Assessment for Monmouthshire (see Vol1 Appendix D) developed in accordance with the principles of the NRW Green Infrastructure Assessment Guidance Note 42 (2023).

Volume 2 – Delivery Plan

Volume 2 of the Strategy provides the Council's delivery plan for GI in Monmouthshire. Provided as a separate document, the Delivery Plan includes prioritised action plans for delivery of strategic/landscape-scale GI projects, and local GI projects to support development at the key growth locations and rural secondary settlements. The action plans are designed to support funding bids by the Council and its delivery partners.

GIS Database of GI Assets

A comprehensive and user-friendly GIS Database of GI assets and related information is held by the Council, which provides a tool for informing land use planning and land management decision-making with regards to GI.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be kept under review by the Council and updated as necessary to have regard to changing circumstances.

What is GI?

Chapter 6 (Distinctive & Natural Places) of Planning Policy Wales 12 defines GI as follows:

'Green infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places.'

Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels.

At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands.

At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems.

At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks.'



Range of GI Scales/Connectivity

Adapted from GI Design and Placemaking (Scottish Government, 2011)



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Purpose for GI in Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire has a well-connected multifunctional green infrastructure network comprising high quality green spaces and links that offer many benefits for people and wildlife.

The network's integrity and connectivity is maintained, protected and enhanced in a planned and managed way, which recognises the interdependency and multifunctionality of landscape, heritage and biodiversity elements.

Investment in green infrastructure underpins the County's ongoing economic, social and environmental success by supporting sustainable growth, improving quality of life and place, delivering ecosystem resilience and tackling the nature and climate emergencies.

Monmouthshire is a green and healthy place to live, with an increasingly coherent and resilient ecological network of wildlife habitats, helping to conserve biodiversity.



The GI purpose is underpinned by the following three core aims:

1. **Support health and wellbeing delivering strong communities and vibrant places; enriching people's lives through engagement and activity**
2. **Maintain and enhance biodiversity and support resilient ecosystems to address the nature and climate emergencies**
3. **Conserve, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's GI assets**

Together, the purpose and three core aims provide the overarching framework for positive actions by all stakeholders involved in the future protection, management and enhancement of GI in Monmouthshire.
























Strategic GI Objectives

The GI Strategy's purpose and core aims are supported by five strategic objectives and associated priorities for guiding the planning, management and delivery of GI in Monmouthshire. These objectives and priorities are reflected in the GI projects identified in the Delivery Plan (see Volume 2), and are also intended to be used in monitoring the outcomes of projects. The strategic GI objectives are:

1. **Improve Health & Wellbeing**
2. **Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience**
3. **Support Climate and Nature Resilience**
4. **Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness**
5. **Support Sustainable Economic Development**



The GI Strategy's objectives will contribute to the Welsh Government's National Well-being Goals, and the Council's Local Well-being Objectives and Biodiversity & Resilience Objectives as highlighted below:

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 – Improve Health & Wellbeing																			
2 – Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience																			
3 – Support Climate and Nature Resilience																			
4 – Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness																			
5 – Support Sustainable Economic Development																			

Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network

The Strategic GI Network provides an overarching framework for GI planning, management and delivery across the County as an integral part of the wider Gwent Green Grid. The network embraces strategic GI corridors connecting GI assets within the County and in neighbouring areas, providing important GI links to Monmouthshire's main settlements.

An overview of the strategic needs and opportunities for restoring, maintaining, creating and/or connecting GI assets to help strengthen Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network for the future can be found in Volume 1 of the GI Strategy

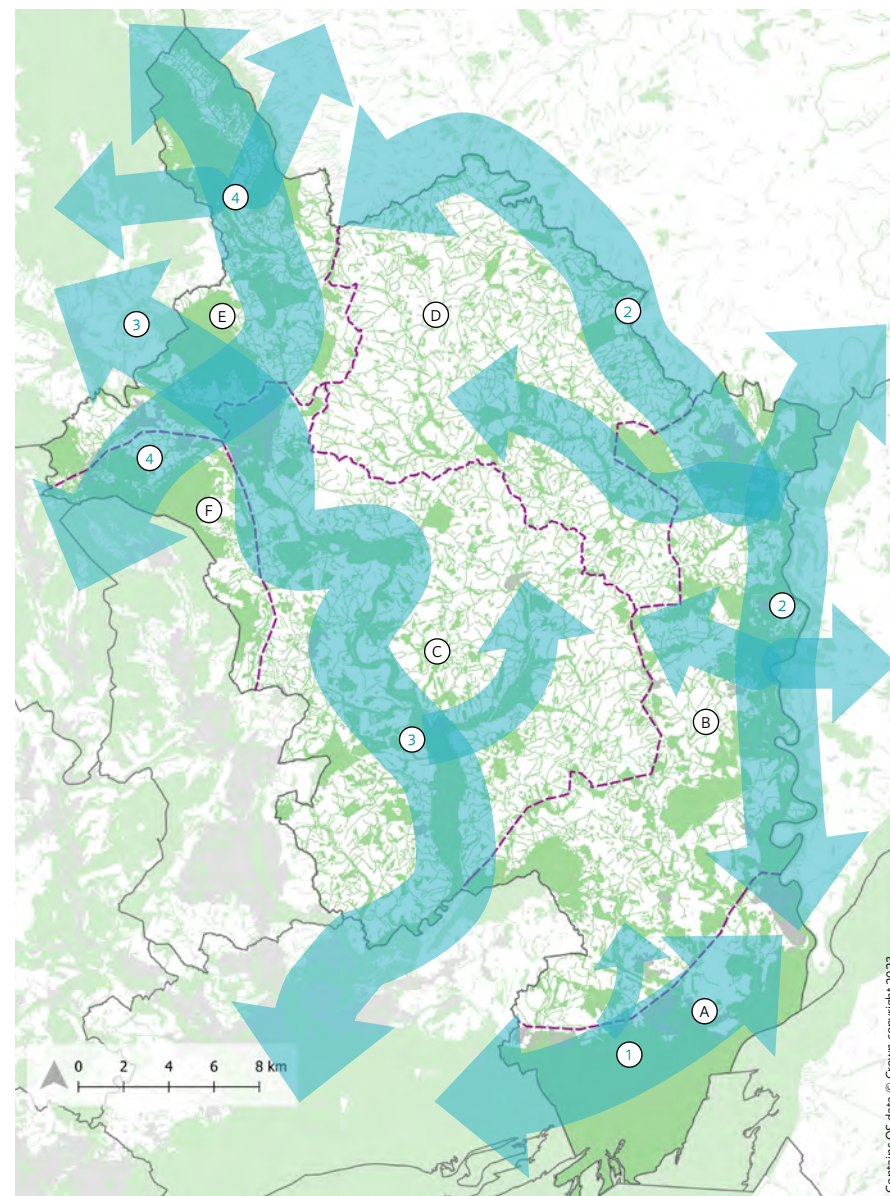
Strategic GI Corridors:

- 1: Gwent Levels/Coast
- 2: Wye Valley & Tributaries
- 3: Usk Valley & Tributaries
- 4: Bannau Brycheiniog Uplands

GI Zones:

- A: Gwent Levels
- B: Wye Valley & Wentwood
- C: Central Monmouthshire – South
- D: Central Monmouthshire – North
- E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains
- F: Eastern South Wales Valleys

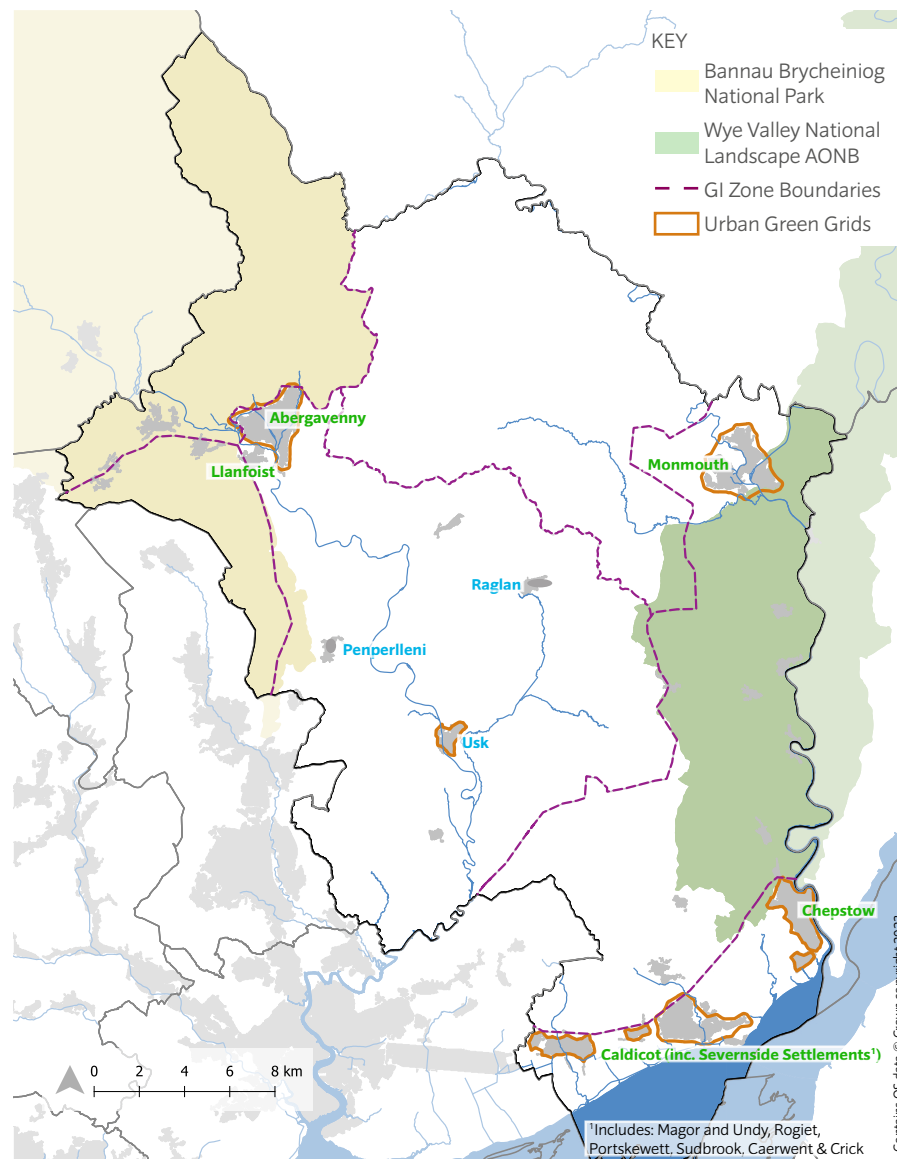
 Existing GI Network



Contains OS data © Crown copyright 2023

Settlement GI Networks

Set within the context of the Strategic GI Network for Monmouthshire, the key opportunities for strengthening the GI Networks in and around the the **primary settlements** and **secondary settlements** identified for development in the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033 Preferred Strategy (endorsed October 2023) are highlighted in the GI Strategy. Where appropriate, these opportunities are carried forward into the projects set out in the GI Delivery Plan (Volume 2).



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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

April 2024

Volume 1 **Strategic Framework**



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Key Messages

- First published in 2019, the Green Infrastructure Strategy has been reviewed to reflect changes in policy, the new Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy and updated baseline data. The review also reflects progress in delivery of green infrastructure projects over the last 5 years.
- Planning Policy Wales 12 defines Green Infrastructure as 'the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places' (such as towns and villages).
- This Green Infrastructure Strategy promotes an integrated and joined up approach to delivering Green Infrastructure that takes into account the needs of Monmouthshire's communities, environment and economy.
- An important overarching principle underpinning the Strategy is the need to recognise the multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure assets and to maximise the benefits different assets can deliver through an integrated approach. For example, green spaces can be used for sustainable food production, contribute to flood management and provide access to nature for informal recreation. These benefits can support improved health and well being, climate mitigation/adaptation and biodiversity.
- It is essential that the inter-relationship and connections between the individual projects outlined in the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan are considered in the round to ensure that opportunities for shared outcomes and mutual benefits are maximised.

Green Infrastructure Purpose for Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire has a well-connected multifunctional green infrastructure network comprising high quality green spaces and links that offer many benefits for people and wildlife.

The network's integrity and connectivity is maintained, protected and enhanced in a planned and managed way, which recognises the interdependency and multifunctionality of landscape, heritage and biodiversity elements.

Investment in green infrastructure underpins the County's ongoing economic, social and environmental success by supporting sustainable growth, improving quality of life and place, delivering ecosystem resilience and tackling the nature and climate emergencies.

Monmouthshire is a green and healthy place to live, with an increasingly coherent and resilient ecological network of wildlife habitats, helping to conserve biodiversity.



1

Setting the Scene



1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Strategy sets out Monmouthshire County Council's approach to the planning, management and delivery of Green Infrastructure (GI) focussed around the following strategic objectives and priorities:

- Improve Health & Wellbeing
- Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience
- Support Climate & Nature Resilience
- Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness
- Support Sustainable Economic Development

1.1.2 In doing so, the GI Strategy will help contribute to the delivery of:

- Replacement Local Development Plan
- MCC Community and Corporate Plan
- MCC Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plans
- MCC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan and Action Plan
- MCC Nature Recovery Action Plan
- Public Service Board Wellbeing Plans

1.1.3 There is great benefit from working in a collaborative, integrated and joined-up way to deliver GI through a multi-disciplinary approach as illustrated on **Diagram 1.1**, both at the local and regional scale. This way of working is championed by the Gwent Green Grid Partnership through the Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Green Infrastructure Strategy Review

The 2019 Green Infrastructure Strategy has been reviewed to reflect changes to national planning policy; alignment with the new Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy; updated local plans and strategies; updated green infrastructure mapping data/information; and progress in delivery of green infrastructure projects.

1.2 Structure of the Strategy

1.2.1 The Strategy was prepared by CBA on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council.

Volume 1 – Strategic Framework (this document)

1.2.2 Volume 1 of the Strategy sets out the Council's strategic framework for GI provision in Monmouthshire. It identifies key priorities and strategic opportunities where the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of green features and functions would deliver the most significant benefits, both on a county-wide basis and for locations where growth is planned in the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2018-2033 Preferred Strategy (endorsed October 2023).

1.2.3 As required by Planning Policy Wales, the GI Strategy is informed by a Green Infrastructure Assessment for Monmouthshire (see **Appendix D**) developed in accordance with the principles of the NRW Green Infrastructure Assessment Guidance Note 42 (2023).

1.2.4 An Executive Summary of the GI Strategy is set out in a separate document.

Volume 2 – Delivery Plan

1.2.5 Volume 2 of the Strategy provides the Council's delivery plan for GI in Monmouthshire. Provided as a separate document, the Delivery Plan includes prioritised action plans for delivery of strategic/landscape-scale GI projects, and local GI projects to support development at the key growth locations and rural secondary settlements. The action plans are designed to support funding bids by the Council and its delivery partners.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (February 2024)	GI Strategy Signposts
Green Infrastructure Strategy/Assessment Requirements	
Identify landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic and cultural features which need to be safeguarded as part of multi-functioning urban and rural landscapes (para 6.2.7)	Vol 1 - Appendix D (GI Assessment) Vol 1 - Section 3 (GI Strategy) Vol 2 - Delivery/Project Action Plan
Identify how a net benefit for biodiversity will be secured and the attributes of ecosystem resilience will be enhanced, making the links to other land management activity and maintenance regimes (para 6.2.7)	
Facilitate the reduction of pollution by identifying nature based solutions which form part of, or complements, wider activity at a catchment scale to address pollution and improve the restoration of riverine and other habitats (para 6.2.7)	
Address the climate emergency by ensuring tree canopy cover in urban areas is increased, incorporating measures for maintaining good air quality and appropriate soundscapes and by requiring effective natural flood management and sustainable urban drainage schemes (para 6.2.7)	
Ensure communities have accessible natural green spaces of various sizes and scales within reasonable walking and cycling distances (para 6.2.7)	
Identify how the provision of green infrastructure could form an integral part of strategies for growth and provide broad parameters for securing its implementation which recognises the dynamic nature of its provision and identifies measures which will need to be provided to safeguard it over the long term (para 6.2.7)	
The need for ecosystems, habitats and species to adapt to climate change and other pressures should be considered as part of the Green Infrastructure Assessment. (para 6.2.8)	

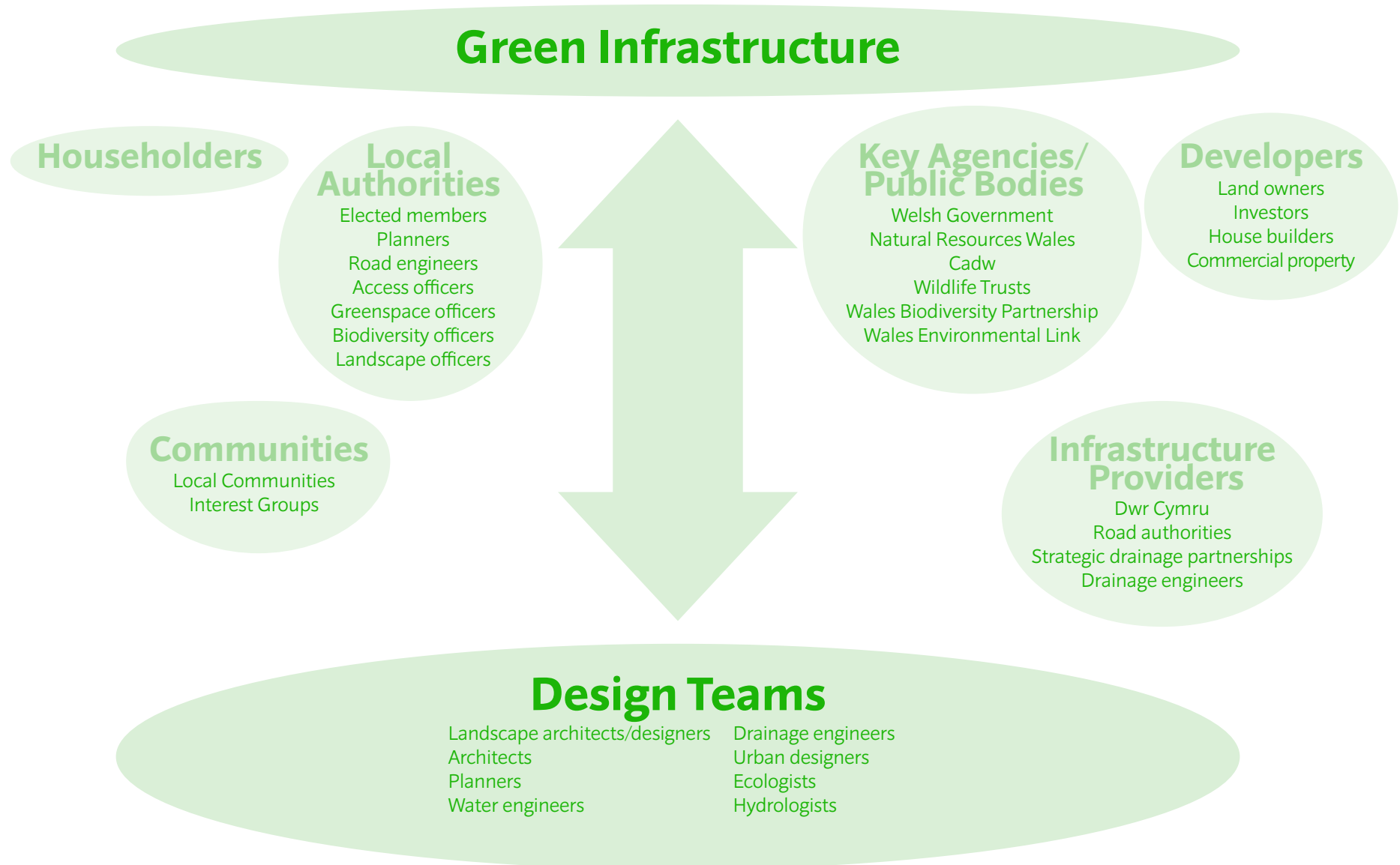
GIS Database of GI Assets

1.2.6 A comprehensive and user-friendly GIS Database of GI assets and related information is held by the Council, which provides a tool for informing land use planning and land management decision-making with regards to GI.

1.2.7 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be kept under review by the Council and updated as necessary to have regard to changing circumstances.

DIAGRAM 1.1 Multidisciplinary Working

(Adapted from *GI Design and Placemaking* (Scottish Government, 2011))



1.3 Links to Other Documents

1.3.1 The GI Strategy was informed by, and should be read in conjunction with, the other key relevant plans and strategies shown on **Diagram 1.2**. The GI Strategy also supports the Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028 and the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2021-26.

1.3.2 This GI Strategy should also be read in conjunction with the Council's Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted in April 2015. A number of other relevant guidance documents are interrelated with this GI Strategy. These are listed in **Box 1.1**.

1.3.3 A number of studies and assessments, carried out to inform the development of the adopted Local Development Plan, provide valuable baseline GI information in respect of the location, quality, quantity and accessibility of a range of GI assets/types (see **Boxes 1.2-1.5**). They also form an important starting point in terms of identifying local GI needs and opportunities.

BOX 1.1 Links to Relevant Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Green Infrastructure	MCC adopted this SPG in April 2015 to support the interpretation and implementation of GI policies S13 and GI1 of the adopted LDP.
Landscape Character	MCC adopted this SPG to support the interpretation and implementation of landscape policies S13 and LC5 of the adopted LDP.
Planning Obligations	MCC intends to produce a Planning Obligations SPG (work in progress). The Interim Policy on the Approach to Planning Obligations (March 2013) sets out an approach to guide negotiations for Section 106 planning obligations between MCC and applicants.
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	MCC adopted this SPG in March 2016 to support the interpretation and implementation of policies S3, S12, SD1, SD2 and DES1 of the LDP.

Other Guidance

Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020 – 2030	This plan sets out an approach to providing and managing access to Monmouthshire's countryside for the benefit of all residents and visitors.
Countryside Access Design Guide (2012)	Intended to assist anyone installing countryside furniture on public rights of way (PRoW) and other access areas in Monmouthshire.
Rights of Way Network Condition & Opportunities Study (2017)	Sets out the condition of the County's Public Rights of Way network and opportunities for improving countryside access.
Public Rights of Way Biodiversity Action Plan (2011)	Aims to ensure that biodiversity is taken into account in the planning and carrying out of all maintenance operations, improvement schemes and other PRoW work. Sets out specific habitat and species action plans.
Gwent Levels Green Infrastructure Strategy (2017)	Provides an overarching long-term vision, principles and framework for the planning and delivery of GI through the Living Levels Landscape Partnership Scheme.

DIAGRAM 1.2 Links to Other Key Relevant Plans & Strategies



BOX 1.2 Open Space Study

Sets out the results of an audit of all open space sites located within 13 settlements/sub-areas in Monmouthshire. Findings relate to the quantity, quality and accessibility of sites/open space types. An assessment of provision against minimum standards is provided.

It should be noted that the definition given to natural/semi-natural greenspace differs to that in the Greenspace Study. This is likely to have a bearing on the levels of provision (surplus/deficiency) identified in the Study. Further advice can be sought from MCC (see **Appendix G**). The 2008 Open Space Study is being updated as part of the RLDP 2018-2033 process.

BOX 1.3 Greenspace Study

Identifies potential greenspace sites, natural sites and accessible natural sites within a 2km buffer zone of 10 settlements/sub-areas in Monmouthshire. An analysis of provision and assessment of opportunities for improvement in relation to accessible natural greenspace is provided.

It should be noted that greenspaces were identified on the basis of available datasets, which suggests that additional sites may exist. Further advice can be sought from MCC (see **Appendix G**). The 2010 Greenspace Study is not being updated as part of the RLDP 2018-2033 process.

BOX 1.4 Ecological Connectivity Assessment

Provides an objective assessment of semi-natural habitat connectivity in and around eight settlements/sub-areas in Monmouthshire. This forms the basis for identifying and informing future habitat management and creation opportunities.

The value of the Assessment's maps and the accuracy with which predictions can be made will be enhanced as the baseline datasets are verified. Further advice can be sought from MCC (see **Appendix G**). The 2010 Ecological Connectivity Assessment is not being updated as part of the RLDP 2018-2033 process. This will be superseded by the Nature Networks Ecological Opportunity Mapping for Gwent.

BOX 1.5 Other Studies

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Studies (2009/2010) and Landscape Sensitivity Update Study (2020)

These studies set out detailed assessments of sensitivity and capacity of local landscape character areas (around main settlements and villages) and candidate strategic sites. As part of the RLDP 2018-2033 process, an updated study was undertaken in 2020 to take into account settlement boundary changes due to new development.

Strategic Transport Study Provides some baseline information relating to sustainable modes of transport and possible transport proposals around development sites. The 2009 Strategic Transport Study is being updated as part of the RLDP 2018-2033 process.



The landscape setting of Llanellen

2

The Green Infrastructure Approach





Start of Wales Coast Path, Chepstow

2.1 Local Policy Drivers

Monmouthshire County Council Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028

2.1.1 The Community & Corporate Plan sets out MCC's ambition to become a zero-carbon county, while supporting the well-being of Monmouthshire's communities. Monmouthshire will be a:

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

2.1.2 These goals are underpinned by a series of actions that will shape the Council's medium-term financial spending plan and priorities, and includes a range of measures to enable progress to be monitored.

Monmouthshire County Council Climate & Nature Emergency Strategy & Action Plans 2024

2.1.3 This strategy and action plan was developed to meet the target to reduce the Council's carbon emissions to zero by 2030. Following community consultation, an action plan was published in November 2021 that includes actions under a range of themes:

- Reducing energy use - reducing the amount of energy that is used for buildings and street lighting
- Using renewable energy - speed up the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy
- Supporting nature recovery and managing green spaces - absorb carbon to support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, and the ability to adapt
- What we buy - reducing carbon by thinking carefully about when and what we buy and whole life costs
- Reducing waste - by encouraging people to reduce, re-use and recycle more
- Walking and cycling - encouraging and making it easier for people to walk and cycle rather than drive
- Greener vehicles - reducing the impact of vehicle use and encouraging use of electric and hydrogen vehicles
- Public transport - encouraging people to use public transport rather than cars
- Education and involvement - helping people understand climate change and what they can do to make a difference
- Climate adaptation - preparing and adapting for the impact of climate change

Monmouthshire County Council Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan 2024

2.1.4 The Plan was first published by the Council in 2017 to meet the Section 6 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience duty of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and to provide a mechanism for maximising the Council's contributions to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Well-being Goals. Progress was reported to Welsh Government in 2019 and 2023, and a refreshed Plan was published in 2024 (prior to a further round of reporting, expected in 2025).

2.1.5 The Forward Plan considers the current biodiversity and ecosystem resilience of Monmouthshire's relevant habitats and species of principal importance for nature conservation, and sets out ways in which the Council can influence biodiversity and ecosystem resilience when exercising its functions as a Public Authority. It considers conservation work that is already underway by the Council and other relevant organisations and identifies opportunities for enhanced delivery and improved governance.



2.1.6 The Plan also highlights the importance of green infrastructure delivery to strengthening biodiversity and ecosystem resilience and its relationship to the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and other plans. The Plan will also identify actions and delivery mechanisms to meet the objectives during the period of 2023-2028.

Monmouthshire County Council Nature Recovery Action Plan 2024

2.1.7 The Local NRAP is a replacement of the Monmouthshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), published in 2005 by the predecessor to the LNP, Monmouthshire Biodiversity Partnership. The Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) is a guide to conservation work in Monmouthshire to deliver outcomes to benefit nature recovery. The plan aims to provide practical, achievable actions designed to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire. We want to motivate communities to actively contribute to the effective restoration and protection of nature in Monmouthshire.

2.1.8 The Monmouthshire Local NRAP has been produced by the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP). The LNP exists to co-ordinate, promote and record conservation actions to promote and enhance nature locally. The Monmouthshire LNP covers the local authority area of Monmouthshire County Council, excluding that in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park which has a separate Local Nature Partnership and Local NRAP.

Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan

2.1.9 Published by the Monmouthshire Public Service Board (PSB) in 2018, the Plan sets out four objectives for improving well-being:

1. giving children and young people the best possible start in life
2. working to improve prosperity in the county
3. making the most of the assets older people bring whilst ensuring their needs are met
4. maximising the benefits of the natural environment

Monmouthshire Wellbeing Assessment 2022-2027

2.1.10 The Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment, is a comprehensive report aimed at understanding the well-being of the county and its communities. It uses a wide range of information to provide an evidence-based understanding of well-being in Monmouthshire, focusing on the strengths and assets of people and their communities. The assessment covers various areas of well-being and focuses on Gwent as a whole, Monmouthshire as a whole, and 5 local areas within Monmouthshire. The report is reviewed annually.



The grounds of Caldicot Castle provide accessible greenspace

Gwent Public Service Board Well-being Plan

2.1.11 Informed by an assessment of the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Gwent undertaken in 2021/22, the Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) Well-being Plan published in 2023 sets out actions to help improve well-being across the region. The Plan sets out what the PSB could do over the next five years to tackle the social, economic, environmental and cultural issues which affect well-being in Gwent under two objectives:

1. We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.
2. We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations

Pollinator Policy

2.1.12 A Pollinator Policy was adopted by MCC in 2014 in response to the Welsh Government's Action Plan for Pollinators to demonstrate the Council's commitment to change and in recognition of our role as land managers. Prepared in partnership with Bee Friendly Monmouthshire, the policy commits MCC to:

- Reduce mowing of road verges - safety cut only for first cut on A & B routes
- Reduce mowing of green spaces
- Urban wildflower planting in towns/villages in place of unsustainable flower beds
- Identify opportunities for development of meadows within open spaces
- Use the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire logo to raise awareness
- Monitor the effectiveness of changes

Local Development Plan

2.1.13 This GI Strategy is intended to expand on policies S13 and GI1 (see **Box 2.2**) of the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2021, which are central to the protection and delivery of GI as part of development in the County.

2.1.14 The Preferred Strategy (2023) for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2018-2033 includes a proposed replacement for the adopted Strategic Policy S13 (see Policy S17 in **Box 2.1**).

BOX 2.1 Strategic Policy S17 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Nature Conservation

Development proposals will embrace the placemaking approach and incorporate Green Infrastructure assets and opportunities that are assessed, designed and managed to deliver a multifunctional resource; capable of delivering a wide range of social, economic, environmental and health and well-being benefits for local communities and the County as a whole, including climate change action, biodiversity action, mitigation and net gain.

Development proposals must:

Maintain, protect and enhance the integrity and connectivity of Monmouthshire's green infrastructure, landscapes, biodiversity, public rights of ways and heritage assets through the following key functions:

- (i) Landscape setting and quality of place, by identifying, assessing, protecting and enhancing the distinctive landscape, historical, cultural, ecological and geological heritage, including natural and man-made elements associated with existing landscape character;
- (ii) Biodiversity and resilient ecosystems by protecting, assessing, positively managing and enhancing biodiversity and geological interests, including designated and non-designated sites, protected and priority species and their habitats, and the ecological connectivity between them;
- (iii) Greenspace provision, connectivity and enjoyment by ensuring the creation of accessible multifunctional interconnected spaces that offer opportunities for recreation and health and well-being;
- (iv) Sustainable energy use;
- (v) Local food production; and
- (vi) Flood attenuation and water resource management.

Note: Policy wording may change post-deposit plan consultation

BOX 2.2 Development Management Policy GI1 Green Infrastructure

Development proposals will be expected to maintain, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's diverse green infrastructure network by:

- a) Ensuring that individual green assets are retained wherever possible and integrated into new development. Where loss of green infrastructure is unavoidable in order to secure sustainable development appropriate mitigation and/or compensation of the lost assets will be required;
- b) Incorporating new and /or enhanced green infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size. Where on-site provision of green infrastructure is not possible, contributions will be sought to make appropriate provision for green infrastructure off-site.



Residential development in Rogiet incorporating a sustainable drainage system

Note: Policy wording may change post-deposit plan consultation

2.1.15 These policies are supported by the adopted Green Infrastructure and Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Guidance. Other key adopted LDP policies that relate to GI are listed in **Diagram 2.1**.

DIAGRAM 2.1 Relevant adopted LDP Policies



2.2 Regional Policy Drivers

2.2.1 Key strategies and plans that provide the regional framework for GI planning, delivery and management in Monmouthshire are listed in Box 2.3.

2.2.2 Of particular importance is the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy developed by the Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP). The Partnership is working to improve the region's GI network and ensure its natural resources are healthy and resilient to change, and thereby better able to provide vital well-being benefits for current and future generations. Established in March 2020, the GGGP includes the five local authorities of Gwent (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils) as well as Natural Resources Wales.

BOX 2.3 Regional Plans and Strategies Context

Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024)

This strategy aims to support the Gwent Green Grid Partnership's aspirations to improve the region's green infrastructure, which has a crucial role to play in addressing nature, climate change and health emergencies, as well as providing green job opportunities. It sets out a high-level, regional framework to support public bodies on the Gwent Public Service Board working in a collaborative, integrated and joined up way to discharge their duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 through a regional approach to green infrastructure delivery reflecting Welsh Government natural resources and planning policy.

The strategy is intended to act as a mechanism for green infrastructure delivery to support the Gwent Public Service Board's Well-being Plan, the Natural Resources Wales South East Wales Area Statement and the forthcoming Strategic Development Plan for Gwent. Crucially, the strategy aims to support a coordinated approach to green infrastructure project development, funding and delivery through a set of strategic action plans. These are intended to support a range of positive well-being outcomes for Gwent's communities, particularly within urban communities experiencing health inequalities.

NRW South East Wales Area Statement (2020)

Developed in response to the national Natural Resources Policy through a collaborative process involving local stakeholders, the South East Wales Area Statement covers the Local Authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. The South East Wales Area is also referred to as Gwent.

The Area Statement sets out landscape-scale nature-based solutions to addressing the increasingly complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges that transcend traditional management boundaries. It aims to inform internal and external planning and help stakeholders to consider different ways of working together. To ensure everyone involved in the Area Statement process is thinking of South East in the same context, four strategic themes are used to investigate and understand place:

1. Linking Our Landscapes.
2. Climate Ready Gwent.
3. Healthy Active Connected.
4. Ways of Working.

Gwent Public Service Board Regional Well-being Plan (2023)

The Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) carried out its Assessment of the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Gwent in 2021/22. The PSB have used the information from the assessment to create its Well-being Plan to help improve well-being across the region.

The Plan sets out what the PSB could do over the next five years to tackle the social, economic, environmental and cultural issues which affect well-being in Gwent.

The PSB has identified two objectives:

1. We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.
2. We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.

The Gwent PSB Well-being Plan was published in August 2023.

South East Wales Strategic Development Plan (forthcoming)	<p>All Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) prepared in Wales now have to be in general conformity with Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.</p> <p>The South East Wales SDP was the first SDP in Wales to formally commence preparation in 2022. This introduces a tier of regional planning to address matters extending beyond Local Authority boundaries.</p> <p>As a cross-boundary asset, strategic GI lends itself well to a more regional scale of planning. SDPs may provide a mechanism through which to consider regional scale planning for connections and larger, strategic GI assets.</p>
Gwent State of Nature Report (2021)	<p>The Greater Gwent State of Nature report, produced in 2021, looks at the status and trend of 100 species found within Greater Gwent, providing a snapshot of biodiversity status, trends and threats in the wider area.</p> <p>The species included are a wide selection from different groups and different habitats, chosen with the aim of providing a snapshot that represents much of the biodiversity that is to be found within the diverse Gwent region. A secondary aim of this report is to examine the availability of biological data at the regional level; to demonstrate what can be shown with the wealth of data that has already been collected; and to highlight where there are knowledge gaps or data issues.</p>

Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan (GGNRAP) (2021)	<p>Developed by the Resilient Greater Gwent Partnership in 2021, the GGNRAP provides a 10-year plan for guiding public bodies in taking action to support nature recovery by creating a resilient and connected ecological network at a regional scale across Gwent.</p> <p>The GGNRAP has been developed to both inform and support the integration between the national and local NRAPs, which are being developed for each Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to support cohesive joined up approaches when developing and delivering strategies plans and actions</p> <p>The GGNRAP's aims are relevant to GI delivery, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystems that are functioning and resilient • Increased diversity of species and habitats • People connected with nature • Reduction of pollution and invasive non-native species • Partners that are working better together
Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Pollinators in South East Wales (2015)	<p>The Action Plan was commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen Councils. Published in 2015, the Action Plan is part of the wider Pollinators for Life project funded by Welsh Government's Nature Fund, which aims to address the decline in Welsh biodiversity through landscape-scale projects.</p> <p>Action Plans for pollinators are provided for different green infrastructure types of publicly owned land, which include for example school grounds; roadside verges; civic spaces; allotments and community gardens; and public parks. Many actions relate to changes to management regimes for the benefit of pollinators such as cutting grass to different heights and/or at different times of the year. Some actions require more extensive changes such as development of wildflower meadows or formal planting areas.</p>

Gwent Green Grid Green Corridors Strategic Access Action Plan (2024)

Developed by the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, the Action Plan provides a strategic approach to delivery of improved and sustainable countryside access by public bodies and stakeholder organisations working collaboratively across local authority boundaries in Gwent to:

- Enable people to lead active healthy lifestyles
- Provide economic opportunities
- Support local communities and volunteering
- Expand, where possible, the network available to cyclists and horse riders
- Provide sustainable and long-term solutions

It provides a framework for a clear strategic approach and stronger partnership working across the five local authority areas within the Gwent region, in relation to access planning and management.

Gwent Green Grid Woodland Priority Planting Action Plan

Developed by the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, the Action Plan provides a 10-year priority woodland planting and implementation programme to support public bodies and stakeholder organisations across the region in taking positive action to tackle climate change, through carbon storage and increasing the resilience of ecosystems to the risks from a changing climate.

It provides a framework for a consistent approach to woodland planting and management across Gwent. In addition to supporting Welsh Government's Woodlands for Wales Strategy and National Forest for Wales commitments, it provides a delivery mechanism for the South East Wales Area Statement, the Gwent PSB Well-being Plan and the Gwent Strategic Development Plan, as well as supporting local authorities' climate change action plans.

Upland Commons of South-east Wales Natural Resources Management Plan (2015)

The Plan is based on an ecosystems approach to the management of the uplands commons of South East Wales (encompassing parts of Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons National Park). The Plan identifies and informs the delivery of a portfolio of projects intended to restore important areas of upland habitat to favourable condition; enhance biodiversity; improve opportunities for sustainable grazing; identify innovative additional commercial uses including land-based products; support tourism development; and assist with climate change resilience by storing water and capturing carbon.

Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026

The Management Plan for the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB sets out the vision for the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the priorities for its management over a 5 year period. The Plan formulates Local Authority policy "for the carrying out of their functions in relation to" the management of the AONB. It also provides guidance to the local communities and many landowners, residents and visitors in the area.

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Management Plan 2018-2023

The Plan identifies an overall vision and key principles for the management of the World Heritage Site, together with short-, medium- and long-term objectives. These are supported by a suite of policies for the continued effective protection, conservation, presentation and transmission of the Site's Outstanding Universal Value over the plan period (2018-2023).

2.3 National Policy Drivers

2.3.1 The concept of a GI approach to land-use planning, design and management can deliver a wide range of policy outcomes (e.g. in relation to sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity, place-making, economic growth and health and well-being). It is well established through the Welsh spatial planning system and provides a means to bring together and deliver policy and advice messages in a holistic way. National legislation and policies that provide the framework for the conservation, delivery and promotion of GI in Monmouthshire are listed in **Box 2.4**.

BOX 2.4 National Legislative & Policy Context

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Section 4 of the Act sets out principles for promoting a joined-up and sustainable approach to the management of natural resources and ecosystem services in Wales. The Act places a duty (Section 6) on public bodies to prepare a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan, demonstrating how they intend to deliver the plan in collaboration with other partners, taking into consideration the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales and the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Section 7 of the Act requires Welsh Government, in consultation with NRW, to publish a list of the organisms and habitats of principal importance (priority habitats), and take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance this list, including encouraging others to do the same.

Natural Resources Policy (Welsh Government, 2017)

A statutory requirement of the Environment (Wales) Act, this sets out Welsh Government's policy for the sustainable management of Wales' natural resources to maximise their contribution to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Policy outlines three national priorities: delivering nature-based solutions; increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency; and taking a place-based approach. The Policy sets the context for the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) and Area Statements produced by NRW, which aim to ensure that the national priorities inform the approach to local delivery.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

This Act seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Public bodies must do what they do in a sustainable way and 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 to delivering services and advice. Public bodies need to make sure that, when making their decisions, they take into account the impact they could have on people living in Wales. The Act includes GI related indicators for monitoring implementation, such as:

- Areas of healthy ecosystems in Wales.
- Status of Biological diversity in Wales.
- Percentage of surface water bodies, and groundwater bodies, achieving good or high overall status.
- Emissions of greenhouse gases within Wales.
- Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution in the air.
- The Ecological Footprint of Wales.
- Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling.

Nature Recovery Plan for Wales (Welsh Government, 2015)

The Plan sets out how Wales will deliver the commitments of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the decline in biodiversity by 2020. It includes a strategy for our current and proposed action, particularly through the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and through the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, will contribute to reversing the loss of biodiversity in Wales. Part 2 (updated 2020) of this plan is an Action Plan setting out those actions which have been specifically identified to meet objectives to reverse the decline of biodiversity.

Vital Nature: Making the Connections between Biodiversity and the People and Places of Wales (NRW, 2018)

Vital nature is NRW's strategic steer for biodiversity to 2022. It sets out NRW's priorities, direction of travel and ways of working with regards to delivering its Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience duties through the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. Through a series of goals and commitments, it establishes a high-level framework for action in line with the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales.

Future Wales 2040

The National Development Framework sets out a 20-year land use framework for Wales. It will be reviewed every 5 years, and sets out where nationally important growth and infrastructure is needed and how the planning system can deliver it. It provides direction for Strategic and Local Development Plans and supports the determination of Developments of National Significance; sitting alongside Planning Policy Wales, which sets out the Welsh Government's planning policies and which will continue to provide the context for land use planning. It supports national economic, transport, environmental, housing, energy and cultural strategies and ensures they can be delivered through the planning system

Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales (2019)

Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales is the climate change adaptation plan for Wales. It sets out Welsh Government commitments to respond to the impacts from climate change we already see and those we expect to see in the future. The plan complements the steps to decarbonise the economy of Wales. The Plan shows how Welsh Government is taking action, over the next five years, to address the areas of greatest risk. This includes:

- protecting people, communities, buildings and infrastructure from flooding,
- protecting water supplies from drought and low river flows,
- tackling land management practices that exacerbate climate risks,
- managing risks to ecosystems and agricultural businesses.

Planning (Wales) Act 2015

The Planning (Wales) Act provides the legislative framework for the operation of the planning system in Wales. It supports the delivery of national, local and community aspirations by creating sustainable places where citizens have improved access to quality homes, jobs and built and natural environments and supports the use of the Welsh language.

Natural Resources Wales State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales 2020

SoNaRR 2020 assesses how Wales is achieving the sustainable management of natural resources to improve Wales' well-being (Natural Resources Wales' purpose). It assesses Wales' progress against 4 aims and outlines opportunities for action for a sustainable future:

1. Stocks of natural resources are safeguarded and enhanced.
2. Ecosystems are resilient to expected and unforeseen change.
3. Wales has healthy places for people, protected from environmental risks.
4. Contributing to a regenerative economy, achieving sustainable levels of production and consumption.

Planning Policy Wales: Edition 12 (Welsh Government, February 2024)

Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW 12) sets out the current land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. The core objective of national planning policy is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In response to the need for addressing the nature emergency through the planning system, parts of Chapter 6 (Distinctive & Natural Places) of Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 were updated in October 2023 to strengthen national planning policy on GI, Net Benefit for Biodiversity, protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Trees and Woodlands.

The main changes to national GI policy in PPW 12 include: stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure covering cross boundary considerations, identifying key outputs of green infrastructure assessments, the submission of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards. See **Appendix E** for details.

Welsh Government's Net Zero Strategic Plan (September 2022)	This Plan is the start of the journey to net zero and a greener, stronger, fairer Wales. It focuses on Wales' second carbon budget (2021–2025). The Plan brings together evidence and thinking from across the Welsh Government to outline priority decarbonisation initiatives out to 2030. Implementing them successfully will be required to reach net zero as an organisation and support the wider public sector to achieve a collective net zero
Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (Welsh Government, 2009)	Provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. Supplements Planning Policy Wales and should be read in conjunction with it.
Technical Advice Note 12: Design (Welsh Government, 2016)	Provides advice on good design. Supplements Planning Policy Wales and should be read in conjunction with it.
Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk (Welsh Government, 2004)	Provides advice in relation to development and flooding, advising on development and flood risk as this relates to sustainability principles. Supplements Planning Policy Wales and should be read in conjunction with it.
Technical Advice Note 16: Sport, Recreation and Open space (Welsh Government, 2009)	Provides advice for communities, developers and local planning authorities in Wales preparing local development plans and taking decisions about planning applications with regards to sport, recreation and open space. Supplements Planning Policy Wales and should be read in conjunction with it.
Natural Heritage: a Pathway to Health (Countryside Council for Wales Policy Research for the Welsh Assembly Government, 2007)	Sets out the findings of a 12 month study into the impact of the natural environment on health and wellbeing, conducted by the Institute of Rural Health. The study found that the natural environment can play a key role in improving public health and wellbeing.
Community Grown Food Action Plan (Welsh Government, 2010)	Action Plan to promote, support and encourage opportunities for community grown food in Wales.
Active Travel Act Guidance (Welsh Government, 2021)	The guidance includes best practice on active travel infrastructure design and network planning, and gives advice on how to provide related facilities such as cycle parking.

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013	The Active Travel (Wales) Act sets out provisions to make walking and cycling the preferred option for shorter journeys, particularly everyday journeys, such as to and from a workplace or education establishment, or to access health, leisure or other services or facilities. The Act requires local authorities to produce Integrated Network Maps, identifying the walking and cycling routes required to create fully integrated networks for walking and cycling to access work, education, services and facilities.
Framework for South East Wales Networked Environmental Regions (CCW, EA Wales & Wales Environmental Link for Welsh Government, 2009)	First stage in a collaborative project to turn the concept of a Networked Environmental Region (NER) into reality. The report reviews the policy context, briefly describes the unique characteristics of the South East Wales landscape and considers opportunities and challenges across the city region. It also highlights the next steps needed towards implementing the NER.
Wales State of Nature Report 2023	<p>Leading wildlife organisations, including Wildlife Trusts Wales, have published a landmark State of Nature 2023 report. The report shows that nature is continuing to decline at an alarming rate across the UK, which is already one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18% (one in six) of our species are at risk of extinction from Wales, including plants and animals such as Fen Orchid, Water Vole and Sand Lizard. • The abundance of land and freshwater species has on average fallen by 20% across Wales since 1994. • Of almost 3,900 species assessed, more than 2% are already extinct in Wales.
30x30 Target	A global target to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030 (known as '30x30') was agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at COP15. Countries are expected to contribute to this global goal through domestic action to increase coverage of effectively managed protected areas. More than 100 countries have now signed up to the commitment, including the UK. The Biodiversity deep dive: recommendations (Welsh Government, 2022) develops a set of collective actions to support meaningful delivery of the CBD '30 by 30' goal in Wales, recognising the capabilities present in Wales and reflecting duties and approach under the Wellbeing of Future Generations and Environment (Wales) Acts

2.4 What is GI?

2.4.1 Chapter 6 (Distinctive & Natural Places) of Planning Policy Wales 12 defines GI as follows:

'Green infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places.'

*Component elements of green infrastructure (see **Box 2.5**) can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels (see **Diagram 2.2**).*

At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands.

At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems.

At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks.'

BOX 2.5 Examples of GI Components/Assets

- **Parks and gardens** including urban parks; country and regional parks; formal and private gardens; and institutional (e.g. schools and hospitals) grounds (e.g. Caldicot Country Park and the Linda Vista Gardens in Abergavenny).
- **Amenity greenspaces** including informal recreation spaces; play areas; outdoor sport facilities; housing green spaces; domestic gardens; village greens; urban commons; other incidental space; green roofs; hedges; civic squares and spaces; and highway trees and verges (e.g. Fairview open space Chepstow, Undy playing field and Dixon Field in Monmouth).
- **Allotments, community gardens, city farms, orchards, roof gardens, and urban edge farmland** (e.g. Usk Road allotments in Raglan and Sudbrook Road allotments in Portskewett/Sudbrook).
- **Cemeteries and churchyards** (e.g. Osbaston cemetery in Monmouth and St Mary's Churchyard in Abergavenny).
- **Natural and semi-natural rural, peri-urban and urban greenspaces** including woodland and scrub; grassland, heath and moor; wetlands; open and running water; brownfield sites; bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs and quarries); coast and beaches; and Community Forests. It includes important and protected species and habitats such as existing national and local nature reserves and locally designated sites for nature conservation (e.g. Nedern Brook Wetlands SSSI and Fiddler's Elbow National Nature Reserve).
- **Green corridors** including rivers and canals and their banks; road and rail corridors; cycling routes; and public rights of way (e.g. Ifton Lane in Rogiet and the River Usk).
- **Functional green space** including sustainable urban drainage schemes and flood storage (e.g. residential development in Rogiet).
- **Heritage sites** including historic country estates; historic urban public parks; and historic sites and monuments (e.g. St Pierre near Chepstow and Abergavenny Castle and grounds).

Adapted from the Town and Country Planning Association: 'The essential Role of Green Infrastructure: Eco-towns Green Infrastructure Worksheet' (2008).



DIAGRAM 2.2 Range of GI Scales/Connectivity

Adapted from GI Design and Placemaking (Scottish Government, 2011)



2.4.2 Planning Policy Wales goes on to say:

'Green infrastructure is capable of providing several functions at the same time and as a result offers multiple benefits, for social, economic and cultural as well as environmental resilience.

*The components of green infrastructure, by improving the resilience of ecosystems (see **Box 2.6**), can result in positive benefits to well-being including flood management, water purification, improved air quality, reduced noise pollution and local climate moderation, climate change mitigation and food production.*

These benefits are important in urban environments where they can facilitate health and well-being related benefits of open space, clean air and improved tranquility, for example, as well as creating a sense of place and improved social cohesion. In addition, green infrastructure has a role in protecting local distinctiveness, providing economic benefits and social and community opportunities.' (see **Box 2.7**)

2.4.3 Planning Policy Wales also notes the importance of building ecosystem resilience through the planning system. Ecosystem resilience is described by the State of Natural Resources report (2020) as:

"the capacity of ecosystems to deal with disturbances, either by resisting them, recovering from them, or adapting to them, whilst retaining their ability to deliver services and benefits now and in the future"

2.4.4 PPW notes that the broad framework for building ecosystem resilience and securing a net benefit for biodiversity through the planning system includes addressing all of the following attributes which contribute to ecosystem resilience: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Adaptability¹ to change. Collectively these are known as the DECCA framework.

BOX 2.6 Ecosystem Services

- **Supporting services** - essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services (e.g. water and nutrient cycling, soil formation and the processes of plant growth)
- **Regulating services** - that help regulate the environment (e.g. pollination, flood management, pest and disease control, carbon sequestration, water, air and soil quality)
- **Provisioning services** - that provide resources and goods (e.g. food, fresh water, building materials, energy and fuel)
- **Cultural services** - that provide aesthetic, spiritual, religious, recreational or scientific enrichment (e.g. access to green space, tourism, distinctive places and mental wellbeing)

¹ Note - the Monmouthshire NRAP refers to this as 'other Aspects' to recognise that adaptability is a function of the four key attributes

BOX 2.7 GI Benefits

Adapted from GI Design and Placemaking (Scottish Government, 2011)



Local distinctiveness

- Improving townscape, landscape quality and visual amenity.
- Heritage preservation and cultural expression.
- Reinforcing the local landscape character.
- Making places more interesting and distinctive.
- Giving places character and a strong identity.



Economic

- Supporting a reduction in healthcare costs and increased productivity.
- Helping attract and retain a quality workforce.
- Supporting the local green economy.
- Reducing environmental costs such as those associated with the reduction of flood risk.
- Improving the image of a place.
- Boosting property values including house prices due to proximity to greenspace.
- Helping developers get the most out of the site by combining uses, e.g. open space & Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), helping development viability.
- Attracting businesses and inward investors by creating attractive settings.
- Saving energy and money for residents and end users.
- Generating employment.



Climate change

- Reducing CO₂ emissions by providing non-vehicular travel routes and encouraging walking and cycling.
- Providing carbon storage and sequestration in vegetation.
- Providing shelter and protection from extreme weather.
- Managing flood risk: living roofs, large trees and soft landscape areas absorb heavy rainfall.
- Providing for storage of surface water in times of peak flow in SuDS and other water features.
- Cleaning and cooling the air, water and soil, countering the 'heat island' effect of urban areas.
- Saving energy: through using natural rather than engineered solutions.
- Saving energy: living roofs insulate buildings, and large trees provide shade, reducing the need for air.
- Conditioning in the summer and raising ambient temperatures in the winter, reduction in heating costs in the winter due to slowing of wind speeds in urban areas.
- Supplying locally sourced timber, biomass or other bio-fuels to replace fossil fuels.

BOX 2.7 GI Benefits

(Adapted from GI Design and Placemaking (Scottish Government, 2011))



Countryside around Abergavenny

Nature Recovery

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Reducing pollution through use of SuDS and buffer strips.
- Providing new and linking existing habitats or natural features, to allow species movement and increase available habitat areas.
- Protecting aquatic species through appropriate management of waterside habitats.
- Preventing fragmentation of habitats.
- Allowing diverse habitats to be created which are rich in flora and fauna.



Tintern Old Station

Community and social

- Improving community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Creating green spaces for socialising, interaction and events.
- More opportunities and places for children to play.
- Providing improved physical connections through green networks to get between places; and to communities, services, friends and family and wider green spaces.
- Providing spaces for practising and promoting horticultural skills.
- Creating opportunities for community participation and volunteering.
- Providing spaces for education and training.



Canoeing along the River Wye

Health and well-being

- Encouraging exercise and physical activity by providing quality green spaces for walking, cycling, sports and play.
- Providing better opportunities for active travel and physical activity.
- Improving mental well-being by providing access to nature and attractive green spaces and breathing spaces.
- Providing opportunities for growing food locally and healthy eating.



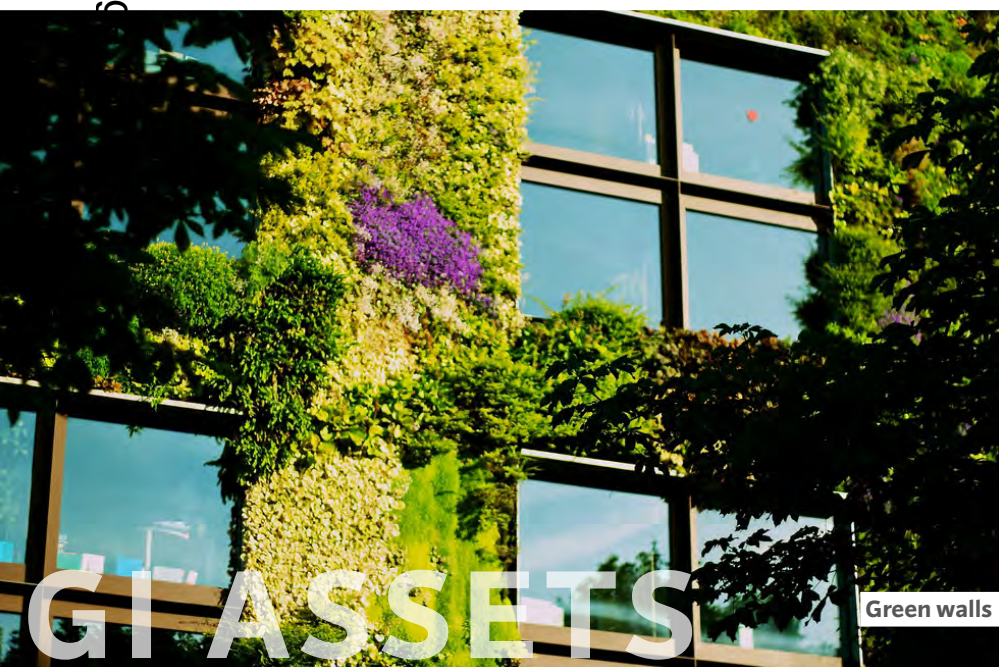
Heritage sites



Private gardens



Allotments & growing spaces



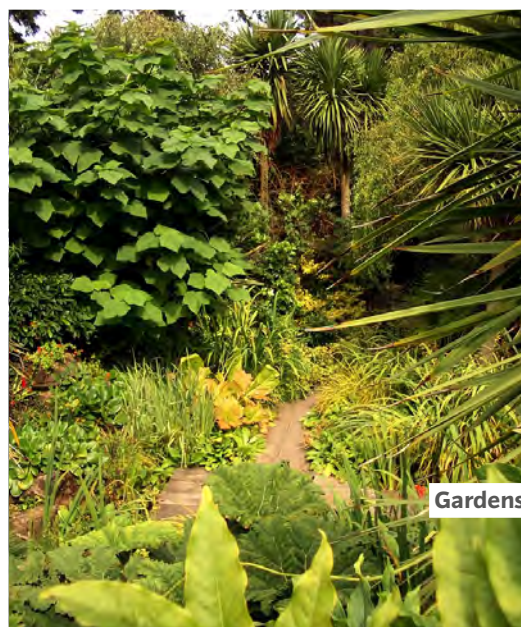
Green walls



Community greenspaces



GIASSETS



Grasslands, heaths and moors

Village greens

Churchyards

Gardens

Play areas

GI ASSETS

2.5 Monmouthshire's Existing GI Network

2.5.1 This section provides an overview of Monmouthshire's existing GI network. A detailed assessment of existing GI assets within different parts of the County is provided in **Appendix D1**.

Monmouthshire's GI network

2.5.2 The County of Monmouthshire lies in South East Wales, between the major centres in South Wales and the South West of England and the Midlands. It covers an area of approximately 88,000 hectares and has an estimated population of 93,000 (2021 census). The main settlements are the three historic market towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth; Caldicot; Usk and Magor/Undy. The landscape is predominately rural with agriculture and tourism forming the main industries.

2.5.3 Monmouthshire is noted for its rural beauty and has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the flat open coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south, to the exposed uplands of the Black Mountains in the north and the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley in the east (MCC, LDP). The Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site (WHS), Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and Wye Valley National Landscape AONB, landscapes of international/national value, are all distinctive features which partly fall within Monmouthshire.

2.5.4 The County includes a wealth of biodiversity/nature conservation assets such as the Severn Estuary, Fiddler's Elbow National Nature Reserve, 68 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 10 of which are designated as European Sites, 752 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and a wide range of species and important habitats. Monmouthshire is particularly well wooded with a range of extensive blocks of ancient, semi-natural, broadleaved and coniferous woodlands such as Trellech Forests, Hale Wood and Chepstow Park Woods. Numerous watercourses (and associated predominantly undeveloped floodplains) cross the County - the main rivers are the Usk, the Wye and the Monnow.

2.5.5 Despite the range of habitats across the county, the Monmouthshire Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (2017) notes that '*the extent and quality of habitats in the County is largely reducing*'. In addition, a number of the European Sites are in unfavourable condition.

2.5.6 Monmouthshire also contains a rich built heritage and historic environment which includes conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and approximately 2400 listed buildings. As well as those GI assets already described, the County comprises a range of open/green spaces (e.g. allotments, parks and outdoor sport areas) located in and around the main settlements. There are also a number of existing 'Incredible Edible' sites and community orchards as well as the traditional allotment settings.

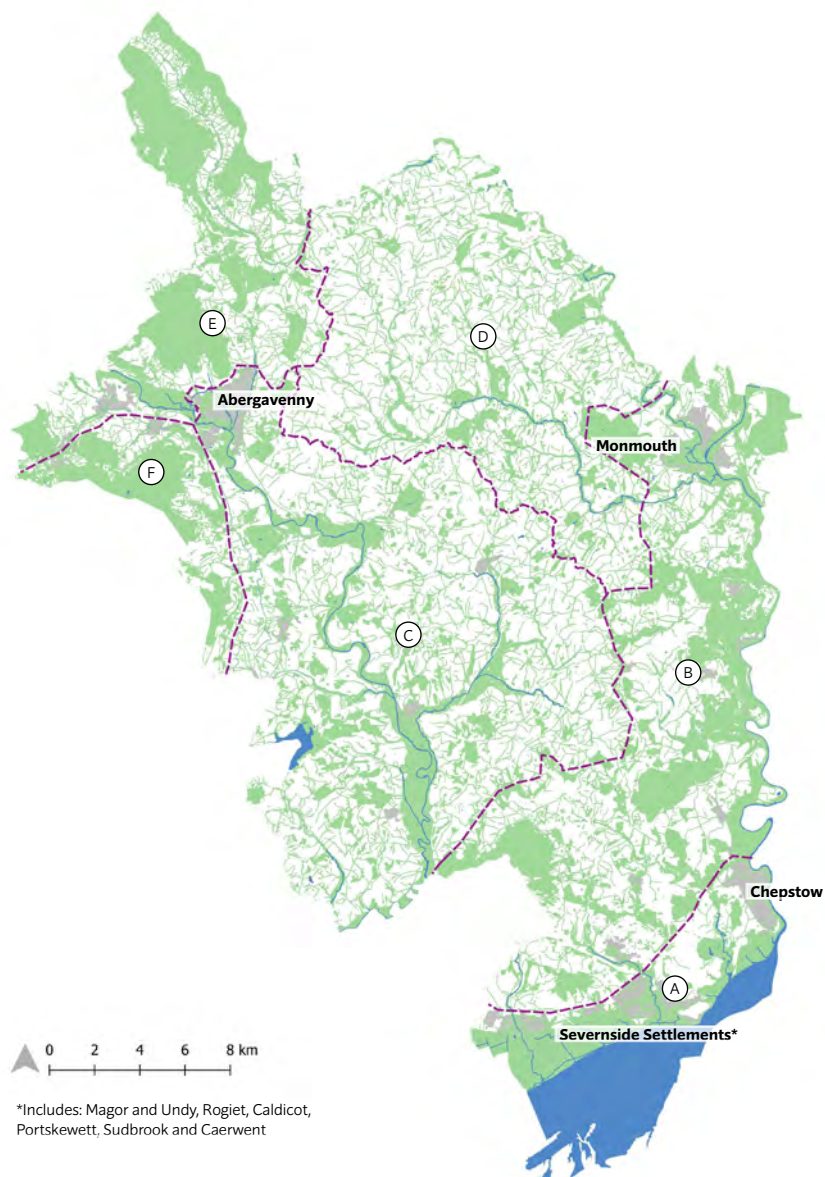
2.5.7 An extensive network of public rights of way provides a range of sustainable access routes for people (non-motorised users) and wildlife across Monmouthshire. It enables movement between settlements and GI assets, to the wider countryside and to amenities beyond the County boundary. This network is complemented by permissive paths, three long distance regional trails, a national trail and two national cycle routes. The All-Wales Coast Path also starts in Monmouthshire. Farmland, private gardens, street trees and other features (e.g. green roofs and SuDS) are other examples of GI assets in Monmouthshire.

2.5.8 As indicated by the above context analysis, Monmouthshire contains a wide range of GI assets. They include public and private assets, with and without public access. Grouped together they represent the County's existing GI network, the extent of which (based on available GI datasets) is shown in **Diagram 2.3**. It should be noted that this diagram only illustrates GI assets within Monmouthshire. However, it should be recognised that some 'landscape-scale' assets extend across administrative boundaries, such as the Wye Valley and the coastline. It is therefore of primary importance that GI is strategically planned to provide a comprehensive and integrated network at the strategic scale.

2.5.9 An assessment of the ecosystem services provided by Monmouthshire's GI assets within different parts (or GI Zones¹) of the County is set out in **Appendix D2**.

¹ The GI Zones reflect the Gwent Green Grid Sub-Areas identified by the Regional GI Strategy, which provide a spatial framework for strategic planning, management and delivery of GI within Gwent.

DIAGRAM 2.3 Monmouthshire's Existing GI Network

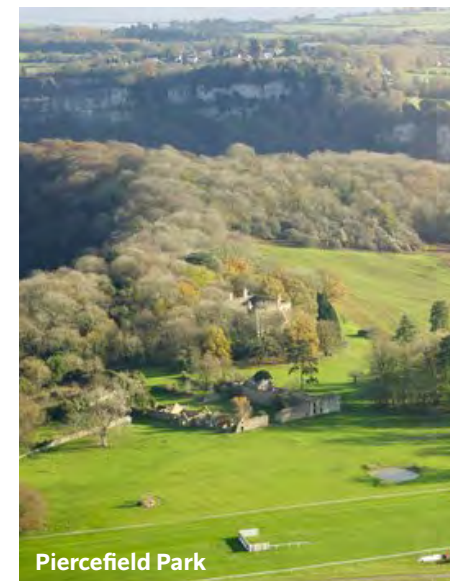


The existing GI network represents GI assets defined by the following datasets: Greenspace Study (excluding non-natural greenspace), Open Space Study, county-wide public rights of way, county-wide designated sites of nature conservation value, county-wide designated features of historic value, county-wide watercourses and water bodies, predominantly undeveloped floodplains (flood risk areas), and county-wide woodlands. See Appendix B for details.

Existing GI Network

GI Zones:

- A: Gwent Levels
- B: Wye Valley & Wentwood
- C: Central Monmouthshire – South
- D: Central Monmouthshire – North
- E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains
- F: Eastern South Wales Valleys



3

Green Infrastructure Strategy



Skirrid Fawr, from the Sugar Loaf

3.1 General

3.1.1 Communities in Monmouthshire depend on the benefits provided by its natural systems to live and prosper. Over centuries, humans have developed methods of controlling the environment for their own benefit, such as channelling water by diverting rivers and draining the land for agriculture. These changes can result in unintended consequences elsewhere, such as flooding and habitat fragmentation. As a result, the long-term sustainability, resilience and capacity of natural systems in Monmouthshire to respond to environmental change and human pressures is at risk.

3.1.2 Careful planning and management is important in identifying interventions that maximise the multiple functions and benefits which integrated networks of GI can provide. There are opportunities for GI creation, enhancement and investment in Monmouthshire, which in turn can benefit local communities, the economy and the environment. This strategic framework identifies important elements of the GI network that require protection and management actions to improve their function or quality.

3.2 Purpose for GI in Monmouthshire

3.2.1 The long-term purpose for the future provision and management of GI in Monmouthshire is set out in **Box 3.1**.

3.2.2 The GI purpose is underpinned by the following three core aims:

1. **Support health and wellbeing delivering strong communities and vibrant places; enriching people's lives through engagement and activity**
2. **Maintain and enhance biodiversity and support resilient ecosystems to address the nature and climate emergencies**
3. **Conserve, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's GI assets**

3.2.3 Together, the purpose and three core aims provide the overarching framework for positive actions by all stakeholders involved in the future protection, management and enhancement of GI in Monmouthshire.

BOX 3.1 Green Infrastructure Purpose for Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire has a well-connected multifunctional green infrastructure network comprising high quality green spaces and links that offer many benefits for people and wildlife.

The network's integrity and connectivity is maintained, protected and enhanced in a planned and managed way, which recognises the interdependency and multifunctionality of landscape, heritage and biodiversity elements.

Investment in green infrastructure underpins the County's ongoing economic, social and environmental success by supporting sustainable growth, improving quality of life and place, delivering ecosystem resilience and tackling the nature and climate emergencies.

Monmouthshire is a green and healthy place to live, with an increasingly coherent and resilient ecological network of wildlife habitats, helping to conserve biodiversity.



3.3 Strategic GI Objectives and Priorities

3.3.1 The GI Strategy's purpose and core aims are supported by five strategic objectives and associated priorities for guiding the planning, management and delivery of GI in Monmouthshire (see **Box 3.2**). These objectives and priorities are reflected in the GI projects identified in the Delivery Plan (see Volume 2), and are also intended to be used in monitoring the outcomes of projects.

BOX 3.2 Strategic Green Infrastructure Objectives

1. **Improve Health & Wellbeing**
2. **Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience**
3. **Support Climate and Nature Resilience**
4. **Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness**
5. **Support Sustainable Economic Development**



Provision of public open space

3.3.2 The GI Strategy supports many of the national well-being goals (see **Box 3.3**) that public bodies have a duty under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to contribute to, in delivering sustainable development as defined in the Act - *to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*.

BOX 3.3 National Wellbeing Goals

1. **A Prosperous Wales** – *an innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.*
2. **A Resilient Wales** - *a nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).*
3. **A Healthier Wales** - *a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.*
4. **A More Equal Wales** - *a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).*
5. **A Wales of Cohesive Communities** - *attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.*
6. **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** - *a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.*
7. **A Globally Responsive Wales** – *a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.*

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

3.3.3 In addition, the GI Strategy also promotes the following five “ways of working” advocated by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:

- **Integration** – it reflects a joined up approach to communities and people, the economy, the environment and culture.
- **Long-term thinking** – the Strategy aims to balance current and long-term needs for GI.
- **Prevention** – the GI Strategy encourages taking action now to prevent problems in the future.
- **Collaboration** – it promotes working with a range of stakeholders to meet its GI objectives
- **Involvement** – it involves people affected by actions in delivery of GI projects.

3.3.4 At a local level, the GI Strategy also seeks to contribute to the well-being objectives of the Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan (see **Box 3.4**).

BOX 3.4 Local Well-being Objectives

1. **Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life**
2. **Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change**
3. **Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change** (see **Appendix F** for details)
4. **Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county**

Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan (Monmouthshire PSB, February 2018)

3.3.5 The GI Strategy also supports the objectives of the Monmouthshire Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (see **Box 3.5**) developed by the Council in line with its duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

BOX 3.5 Monmouthshire Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives

1. **Embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels**
2. **Provide nature-based opportunities to raise awareness, support health and well-being and encourage action for nature**
3. **Undertake land management for biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience**
4. **Influence land management to improve ecosystem resilience**
5. **Tackle key pressures on species and habitats**
6. **Support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery**
7. **Use improved evidence, understanding and monitoring to inform action**
8. **Monitor the effectiveness of the plan and review**

See **Appendix H** for full details

Monmouthshire Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (MCC, February 2024)



Objective 1 – Improve Health & Wellbeing

3.3.6 Contributing to improving the health and well-being of communities in Monmouthshire is a key objective for the GI Strategy.

3.3.7 The GI Strategy's priorities for improving the health and well-being of communities in Monmouthshire are:






- Helping people to live healthier and more fulfilled lives through improved access to outdoor opportunities for health and wellbeing.
- Promoting actions that enable and encourage local communities to use, manage and enjoy their local areas for health, wellbeing and community cohesion – with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities and active travel routes.
- Promoting opportunities for sustainable access and recreation that encourage healthy lifestyles and improve well-being for communities in Monmouthshire, including creating and improving safe and pleasant off-road walking and cycling routes.
- Access to GI assets via public rights of way, cycle routes and navigable waterways should be enhanced to maximise opportunities for urban communities and visitors to enjoy the Monmouthshire countryside.

- Provision of well-connected, multifunctional greenspaces close to urban communities in Monmouthshire to encourage physical exercise, and create community gardens/allotments and places for people to meet and interact.
- Support opportunities for community growing initiatives and local sourcing of food production
- Seek opportunities to improve air quality supporting interventions in key areas such as Chepstow, Usk, Abergavenny and across the Severnside area

3.3.8 This objective contributes towards National Wellbeing Goal 3 (creating 'A Healthier Wales' in respect of people's physical and mental well-being), Goal 5 ('A Wales of Cohesive Communities' in respect of creating well-connected communities) and Goal 6 (creating 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language' in respect of participation in recreational activities).

3.3.9 This objective for improving the health and well-being of communities in Monmouthshire also contributes towards Local Wellbeing Objectives 1 and 3.

3.3.10 Subject to grant funding from the Welsh Government, the Regional Gwent Green Grid Partnership is proposing to produce a Health Impact Assessment of regional GI provision that will feed into local GI strategies.

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective 1 – Improve Health & Wellbeing																			

Objective 2 – Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience

3.3.11 Contributing to enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire is a key objective for the GI Strategy.












3.3.12 The GI Strategy's priorities for increasing biodiversity in Monmouthshire are:

- Implement the forthcoming Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Plan
- Improving ecosystem resilience through improved land management for biodiversity, utilising the step-wise approach advocated by PPW12, guiding decision makers in securing a net benefit for biodiversity.
- Promoting actions that work with a range of partners in Monmouthshire to deliver landscape scale interventions delivering multiple benefits (such as improving the habitat condition and connectivity of natural areas on or between protected sites and sites of importance for nature conservation; natural flood risk management opportunities; woodland creation; climate change adaptation and mitigation; and species specific management).
- Ecosystem services on which the prosperity and well-being of communities in Monmouthshire depend should be safeguarded and enhanced by an integrated approach to management of natural resources (as advocated by the GI Action Plan for Pollinators in South East Wales and Bee Friendly Monmouthshire's Hedgerow Manifesto).
- Increase opportunities for people to engage and reconnect with the intrinsic and cultural value of nature in Monmouthshire to provide health and well-being benefits.

3.3.13 This objective contributes towards National Wellbeing Goal 2 (creating 'A Resilient Wales' in respect of maintaining a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecosystem resilience and the capacity to adapt to change) and Goal 3 (creating 'A Healthier Wales' in respect of people's mental well-being by increasing access to nature).

3.3.14 This objective for enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience also contributes towards Local Wellbeing Objective 3.

3.3.15 This objective contributes towards all of the Monmouthshire Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan objectives.

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective 2 – Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience																			

Objective 3 – Support Climate and Nature Resilience

3.3.20 Contributing to supporting climate and nature resilience in Monmouthshire is a key objective for the GI Strategy.




3.3.21 The GI Strategy's priorities for supporting climate and nature resilience in Monmouthshire are:

- Ensuring land and water in Monmouthshire is managed sustainably in an integrated way and reducing the risk from environmental hazards such as flooding and pollution.
- Adapt to and mitigate the potential effects of climate change by enabling Monmouthshire to be more resilient to the risk of flooding, drought and higher urban temperatures.
- Opportunities for local sustainable (small-scale) renewable energy generation and food production in Monmouthshire should be promoted to help mitigate climate change by reducing the area's carbon footprint.
- Consideration of the potential of GI to reduce flood risk through the restoration of natural flood plains and the increased use of sustainable drainage systems/rain gardens in urban areas.
- Promoting opportunities to improve ecological connectivity to support biodiversity.
- Promoting opportunities to improve resilience to invasive species, pests and disease as a result of climate change

3.3.22 This objective contributes towards National Wellbeing Goal 2 (creating 'A Resilient Wales' in respect of maintaining healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to climate change) and Goal 7 (creating 'A Globally Responsive Wales' in respect of making a positive contribution to global well-being by helping address the challenges of climate change locally).

3.3.23 This objective for supporting climate and nature resilience in Monmouthshire also contributes towards Local Wellbeing Objective 3.

3.3.24 This GI objective will also contribute to delivery of the Monmouthshire County Council Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy & Action Plans 2024.

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective 3 – Support Climate and Nature Resilience																			

Objective 4 – Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness




3.3.16 Contributing to strengthening the landscape character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire is a key objective for the GI Strategy.

3.3.17 The GI Strategy's priorities for strengthening the landscape character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire are:

- Improving townscape character and visual amenity through integration of multi-functional greenspace into new development.
- Reinforcing local heritage and cultural identity through place-based solutions.
- Enhancing the distinctive character of Monmouthshire's landscape through an integrated approach to natural resource management (as highlighted in Objective 2).
- Protecting and restoring distinctive historic and semi-natural landscape features.
- Enhancing the condition of degraded landscapes where appropriate.
- Engaging local communities and visitors in appreciating and understanding the cultural and natural influences that shaped the character of the landscape.
- Reinforcing the strong sense of tranquillity, remoteness and wildness found within many places in Monmouthshire that makes a contribution to people's mental well-being.

3.3.18 This objective contributes towards National Wellbeing Goal 6 (creating 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language' in respect of promoting and protecting culture, heritage and the Welsh language) and Goal 3 (creating 'A Healthier Wales' in respect of the mental well-being benefits for people from experiencing the special qualities of the Monmouthshire landscape).

3.3.19 This objective for strengthening the landscape character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire also contributes towards Local Wellbeing Objective 3.

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective 4 – Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness																			

Objective 5 – Support Sustainable Economic Development

3.3.25 Contributing to supporting sustainable economic development in Monmouthshire is a key objective for the GI Strategy.

3.3.26 The GI Strategy's priorities for supporting sustainable economic development in Monmouthshire are:

- Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources to support Monmouthshire's local green economy and develop skills and learning.
- Promoting actions that bring partners together to work with businesses in Monmouthshire to develop opportunities for delivering ecosystem services; improve resource efficiency and reduce energy consumption; identify opportunities and facilitate the sharing of resources between businesses; and re-localise the supply chain.
- Creating opportunities for new businesses/income generation, skills development and job creation in Monmouthshire from environmental land management and conservation, tourism and green technologies.
- Investing in the maintenance and enhancement of greenspaces and other GI assets that contribute to the environmental quality and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's landscapes and settlements, helping attract and retain inward investment.

- Capitalise on the ability of ecosystems services provided by GI assets to alleviate local social and economic issues in Monmouthshire such as management of flood risk.
- Making appropriate provision for GI in the masterplanning of new developments in Monmouthshire that meets local needs, and is well designed and constructed to high environmental sustainability standards.
- Promoting the economic value of our public rights of way network/green corridors as an important investment in the future for the residents and visitors of Monmouthshire.

3.3.27 This objective contributes towards National Wellbeing Goal 1 ('A Prosperous Wales' in respect of creating an innovative, productive and low carbon society, developing a skilled and well-educated workforce and generating wealth and employment opportunities).

3.3.28 This objective for supporting sustainable economic development in Monmouthshire also contributes towards Local Wellbeing Objective 4.

GI Strategy Objective	National Well-being Goals (see Box 3.3)							Local Well-being Objectives (see Box 3.4)				Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives (see Box 3.5)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Objective 5 – Support Sustainable Economic Development	£										£								

3.4 Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network

3.4.1 The Strategic GI Network for Monmouthshire is illustrated conceptually on **Diagram 3.1**. The Strategic GI Network provides an overarching framework for GI planning, management and delivery across the County as an integral part of the wider Gwent Green Grid. The network embraces strategic GI corridors connecting GI assets within the County and in neighbouring areas, providing important GI links to Monmouthshire's main settlements.

3.4.2 Drawing on the detailed assessment of the GI Zones set out in **Appendix D3**, this section provides an overview of the strategic needs and opportunities for restoring, maintaining, creating and/or connecting GI assets to help strengthen Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network for the future.

3.4.3 The GI Zones reflect the Gwent Green Grid Sub-Areas identified by the Regional GI Strategy, which provide a spatial framework for strategic planning, management and delivery of GI within Gwent.

Strategic GI Corridors:

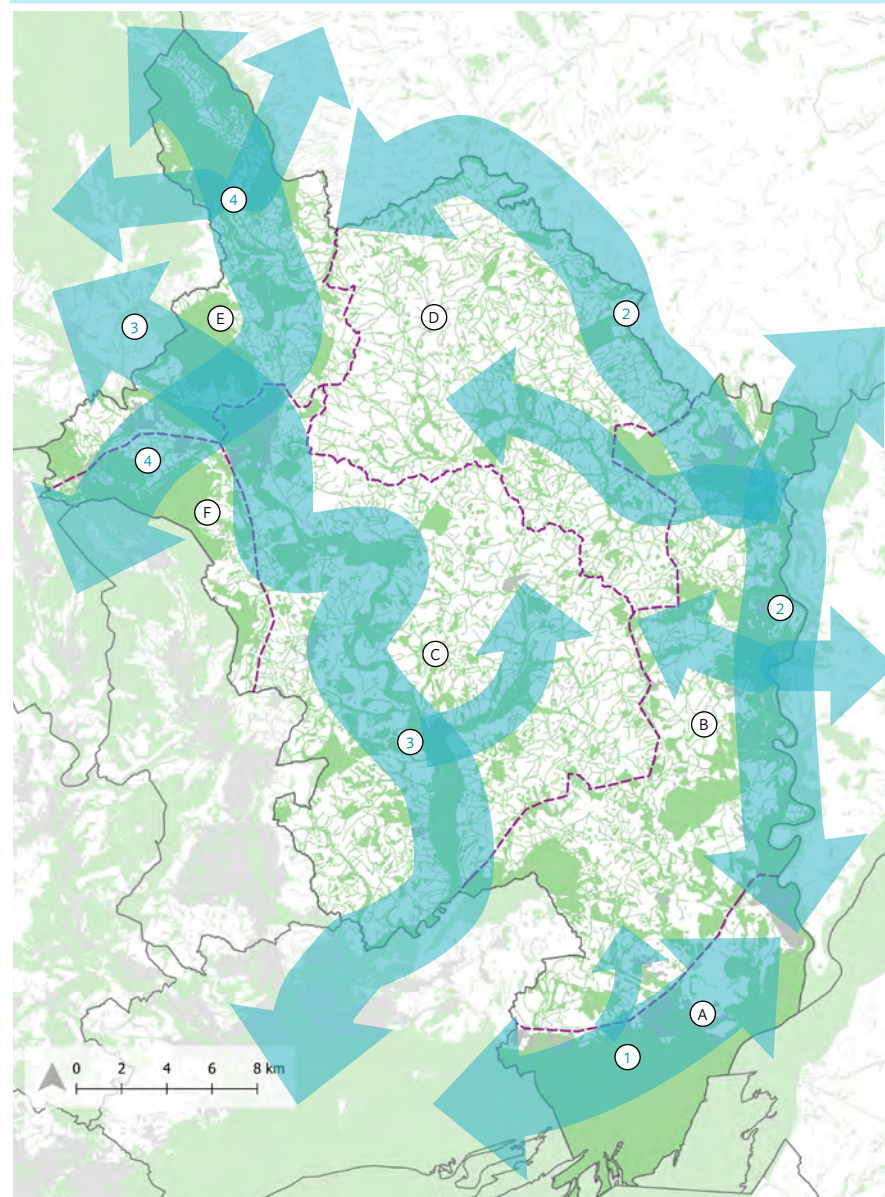
- 1: Gwent Levels/Coast
- 2: Wye Valley & Tributaries
- 3: Usk Valley & Tributaries
- 4: Bannau Brycheiniog Uplands

GI Zones:

- A: Gwent Levels
- B: Wye Valley & Wentwood
- C: Central Monmouthshire – South
- D: Central Monmouthshire – North
- E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains
- F: Eastern South Wales Valleys

■ Existing GI Network

DIAGRAM 3.1 Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network



GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

3.4.4 The County is generally well provided for in terms of accessible greenspace provision. However, there is an overarching **need** to enhance the connectivity of accessible greenspaces within the Strategic GI Network by improving access linkages, particularly to settlements; and to improve interpretation and promotion of existing assets, widening access to those who could most benefit from the County's accessible GI assets such as people with mental well-being challenges (particularly dementia) and physical/visual impairments.

3.4.5 The strategic GI **opportunities** in relation to improving the health and well-being of communities in Monmouthshire are:

- Reviewing and addressing gaps in and accessibility to the public rights of way network, particularly around settlements and their adjacent accessible greenspaces.
- Promoting existing accessible assets to ensure those who would most benefit from access to greenspaces can do so.
- Improving interpretation for existing accessible green infrastructure assets.
- Reviewing, improving and creating new health walks around the County and making rights of way accessible as possible to all as opportunities arise.
- Reconnecting people with nature through improved promotion and facilitation of volunteer/'Friends of' groups.
- Tree planting to improve air quality.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

3.4.6 The County is generally well provided for in terms of natural greenspace and habitats. However, there is an overarching **need** to reverse the erosion and fragmentation of natural and semi-natural habitats in Monmouthshire, in order to reduce biodiversity loss, provide resilience to climate change and provide greater access to nature within the Strategic GI Network.

3.4.7 The strategic GI **opportunities** in relation to enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire are:

- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats, providing management recommendations or support where habitats have been degraded, including the use of nature-based solutions.
- Encouraging and supporting the appropriate management of publicly owned land (including lease land e.g. county farms) and common land, to include where possible the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.
- Ensuring that highways habitats are managed (by MCC and sub-contractors) sympathetically for biodiversity interest, following Codes of Best Practice and Llwybr Newydd i Natur – the Nature Recovery Action Plan for the Strategic Road Network, where appropriate.
- Where opportunities exist, promoting the benefits of high nature-value farming.
- Reconnecting people with nature via traditional and non-traditional education approaches.
- Maximising biodiversity benefits of projects through project design, retention of semi-natural habitats and long-term management for biodiversity.
- Identifying and promoting ecological connectivity in the landscape and utilising biodiversity opportunity mapping tools such as Buglife's Bee Lines.
- Produce and distribute clear practical advice to developers about how they can contribute to nature recovery and minimise the impacts on ecosystem resilience, utilising the step-wise approach advocated by PPW12.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

3.4.8 There is an overarching **need** to manage the water environment appropriately, to ensure biodiversity, flood management, water and soil quality are maintained and enhanced in a changing climate.

3.4.9 The strategic GI **opportunities** in relation to supporting climate and nature resilience in Monmouthshire are:

- Working in partnership with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and NRW, to achieve better flood risk management that reflects GI objectives.
- Increasing the use of SuDS and river buffer zones, helping to hold water back in the catchment and therefore helping to reduce runoff and flood risk.
- Increasing the use of SuDS in new developments where appropriate through implementation of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which establishes SuDS Approving Bodies (SABs) in local authorities and sets a statutory standard for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Statutory Guidance, Welsh Government, 2019).
- Improve land management to benefit soils (for example, reducing frequency of grass cutting).

Creating and managing green spaces/habitats to absorb carbon and support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

3.4.10 There is an overarching **need** to promote high quality design of new development to enhance the integrity and local distinctiveness of the County's landscapes and townscape, and to encourage appropriate management of woodlands and grasslands that are of particular importance in defining the character of the County. There is also a need to understand, conserve and enhance the historic environment, which contributes significantly to landscape character in Monmouthshire.

3.4.11 The strategic GI **opportunities** in relation to strengthening the landscape character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire are:

- Encourage effective place-making, supporting high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage and landscaping in all developments, to ensure that they complement and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and minimise the impact on the natural environment. This should help to create more sustainable and resilient communities.
- Manage and maintain as appropriate the natural and semi-natural habitats that make Monmouthshire distinctive, including woodlands and grasslands.
- Researching, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and conserving archaeology.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

3.4.12 There is an overarching **need** to support a sustainable farming and tourism industry, and appropriate sustainable housing development, in Monmouthshire in ways that deliver the supporting, regulating, provisioning and cultural services essential to the functioning of ecosystems.

3.4.13 The strategic GI **opportunities** in relation to supporting sustainable economic development in Monmouthshire are:

- Providing public benefits in the countryside through farming, working with farmers to support and advise them in sustainable agricultural practices, and appropriate changes to farm practices where necessary.
- Developing a coherent approach to the sustainable management of natural resources, including diversified agricultural land uses and increased renewable energy generation.
- Encouraging and supporting local producers to supply local food and to promote and encourage the use of local produce by public bodies, consumers, accommodation providers and local food outlets.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of the local green economy.
- Supporting actions which improve the image of places, especially with regard to the design of new development, being aware that inward investment is captured by attractive and diverse settings, and that property values can be boosted through proximity to green space.

4

Settlement Green Infrastructure Networks



4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033 Preferred Strategy (endorsed October 2023) focusses growth in and around the following key locations (see **Diagram 4.1**).

Primary Settlements:

- Abergavenny (including Llanfoist)*
- Monmouth*
- Chepstow*
- Caldicot (including Severnside Settlements)*

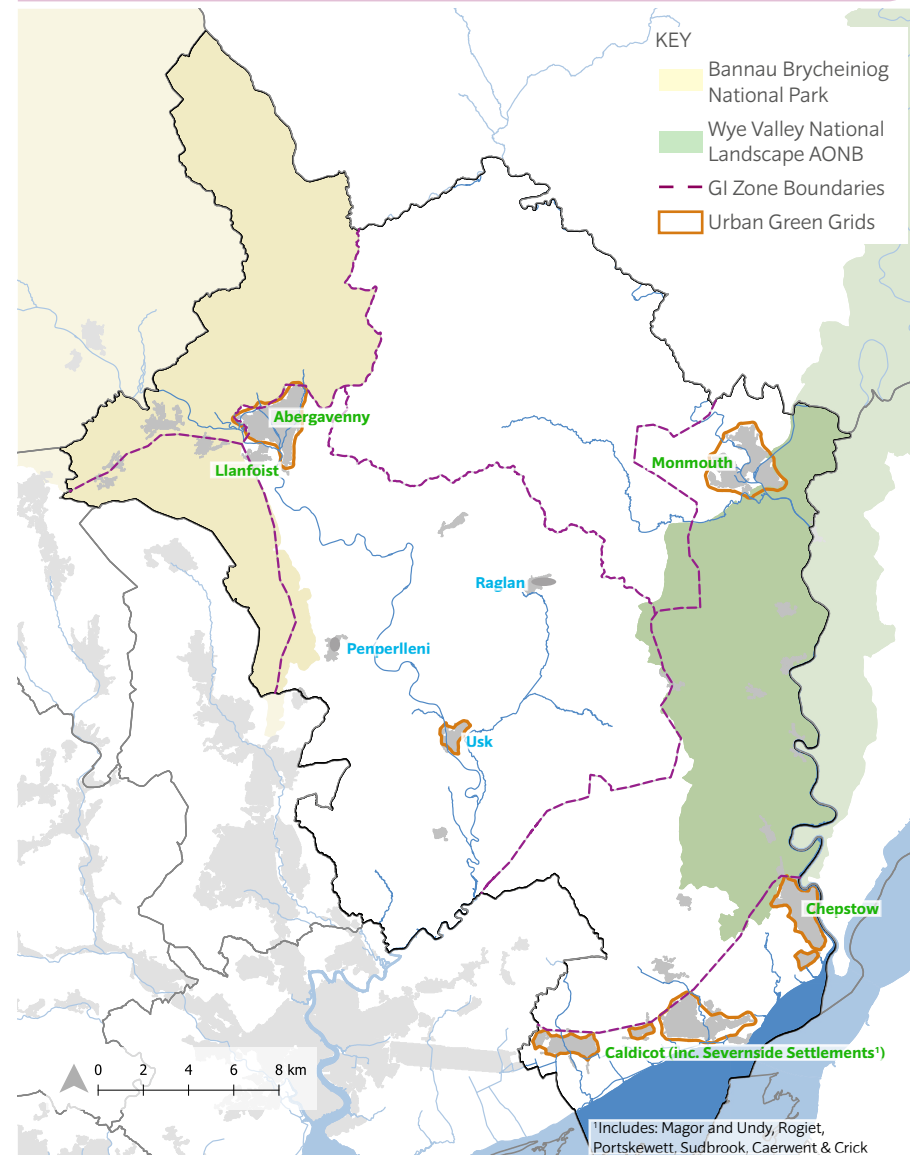
Secondary Settlements:

- Usk*
- Raglan
- Penperlleni

4.1.2 The settlements marked with an asterisk (*) are identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy as Urban Green Grids comprising multifunctional networks of green and blue infrastructure that thread through the built environment, weaving together urban green spaces in areas where people live and work with the wider countryside.

4.1.3 Set within the context of the Strategic GI Network for Monmouthshire illustrated on **Diagram 3.1**, the key opportunities for strengthening the GI Networks in and around the above settlements are highlighted in this section. Where appropriate, these opportunities are carried forward into the projects set out in the GI Delivery Plan (Volume 2).

DIAGRAM 4.1 Key Growth Locations



4.2 Abergavenny & Llanfoist

GI Assets

4.2.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around the settlements of Abergavenny & Llanfoist are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.2**).

4.2.2 Abergavenny is a distinctive historic market town nestled within the Usk Valley, immediately outside the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park's eastern boundary. Its town centre is a conservation area containing many listed buildings, including the ruins of the Norman Abergavenny Castle. Together with nearby Llanfoist, it is overlooked and sheltered by the Bloreng and the Sugar Loaf mountains, located to the south-west and north-west respectively. The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site stretches to the south-west.

4.2.3 Other key GI assets include:

- The River Usk (also a SAC) and its floodplain (to the south of Abergavenny), which includes accessible natural greenspaces such as Castle Meadows.
- The River Gavenny which flows through Abergavenny and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal situated to the south of Llanfoist.
- Historic parks/gardens including Bailey Park within Abergavenny, Abergavenny Priory Deer Park to the north and Coldbrook House to the south-east.
- Public Rights of Way and the Usk Valley Walk long distance path.
- Partly accessible woodlands such as Twyn-yr-allt and Deri-fach (also designated as SSSI and SAC) to the north and Coed-y-person to the south (designated as a SSSI).



GI Opportunities

4.2.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around the settlements of Abergavenny/Llanfoist through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.2**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be¹:

1. Strengthen the A465 and railway corridor, ensuring tree line and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
2. Improve the ecological quality and value of the green corridor adjacent to the River Usk.
3. Create and enhance links between the River Usk, River Gavenny, A465, A4143 and railway corridors with the semi-natural habitats around Llanfoist, including reinforcing connections to the nearby SINC, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and the ancient woodlands.
4. Integrate trees in open green (grassed) space where appropriate² within the Abergavenny Conservation Area.
5. Implement the River Gavenny Project to deliver improvements for nature, identifying opportunities for habitat restoration, creation and improvements to the river health (such as understanding the significance of the culverts as barriers to wildlife dispersal and exploring potential options for reducing their fragmentary effects).
6. Form or strengthen ecological links between The Hill site and the Sugar Loaf ancient woodlands
7. Form or strengthen ecological links between the River Gavenny railway corridor and the woodland and watercourse near St Teilo's vicarage.
8. Enhance ecological connectivity between sections of the Afon Cibi in central Abergavenny with the trees and watercourse of Bailey Park, which itself could be better connected to the River Gavenny to its east.
9. Form or strengthen ecological links between patches of trees in and around The Knoll and Nevill Hall Hospital and also to the Nant Iago to the west, the A4143 corridor to the east and a block of woodland, semi-improved grassland and a small tributary of the River Usk to the south.

¹ See Monmouthshire Open Space Study, Greenspace Study and Ecological Connectivity Assessments for more details

² See Abergavenny Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Proposals (2016) for more details

10. Increase access to rights of way and greenspaces between Abergavenny and Llanfoist that are currently not accessible.
11. Consider opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Abergavenny East, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people, and ecological connections for wildlife.

4.2.5 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Improve the quality and value of the natural and semi-natural greenspace sites within Abergavenny, which at present is variable.
- Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected.
- Ensure blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Improve the quality of amenity greenspace in Abergavenny.
- Improve the quality and value of churchyards & cemeteries.
- Strengthen the major river corridors through Abergavenny. Ensure a buffer of semi-natural habitat with adjacent fields and the built landscape and where possible improve connectivity to nearby areas of semi-natural habitat. Consider improvements to the Usk Valley Walk.
- Enhance connectivity between the small patches of habitats in Abergavenny and distributed across the settlement. For example, linking the woodland and semi-improved grassland of Maindiff Court Hospital with the railway-A465 corridor to its north and west.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Ongoing street tree planting and tree management in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area
- Ongoing tree planting and management in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites
- Identify opportunities to implement/retrofit SuDS systems, where appropriate, to help improve water quality

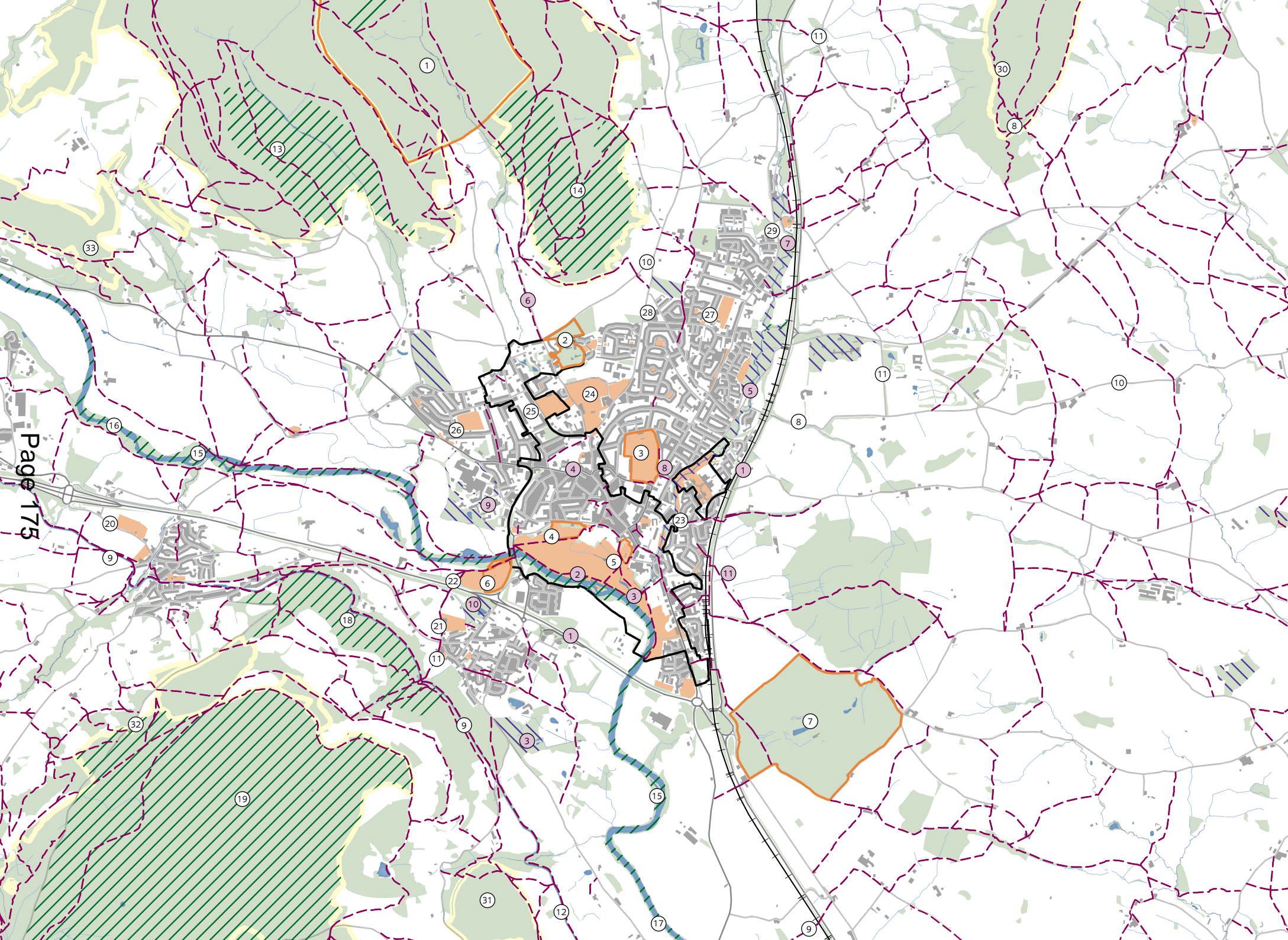


DIAGRAM 4.2 Abergavenny & Llanfoist GI Network Plan

GI Assets

-  Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
-  Statutory Biodiversity Designations
-  Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
-  Watercourses/Waterbodies
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Conservation Area
-  Public Open Space
-  Country Park
-  Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
-  Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

13. Sugar Loaf Woodlands (Deri-fach Woodland) SAC & SSSI
14. Sugar Loaf Woodlands (Twyn-yr-Allt Woodland) SAC & SSSI
15. River Usk SAC
16. River Usk (Upper Usk)/Afon Wysg (Wysg Uchaf) SSSI
17. River Usk (Lower Usk)/Afron Wysg (Wysg Isaf) SSSI
18. Coed-y-person SSSI
19. Bloreng/Blorens SSSI

Historic Parks & Gardens

1. Abergavenny Priory Deer Park
2. The Hill
3. Bailey Park
4. Linda Vista Gardens
5. Abergavenny Castle
6. New Cemetery
7. Coldbrook House

Public Open Space

20. King George's Playing Field
21. Llanfoist/Llan-ffwyst Playing Field
22. Llanfoist/Llan-ffwyst Cemetery
23. St Mary's Church
24. Pen-y-pound (Football Ground, Sports Ground & Playing Field)
25. Cricket Ground
26. Cresta Road Recreation Ground
27. Mardy Recreation Ground
28. Playing Field on Old Hereford Road
29. St Teilo's Church with Bettws Chapel

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

19. Bloreng/Blorens
13. Deri-fach Woodland
14. Twyn-yr-allt Woodland
30. Ysgyryd Fawr
31. Ffwd Wood
32. Woodland near to Coedytwyn
33. Graig

Promoted Routes

8. Beacons Way (Brecon)
9. Usk Valley Walk
10. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 42
11. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 46
12. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 49

GI Opportunities

- ① Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details

4.3 Monmouth

GI Assets

4.3.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around Monmouth are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.3**).

4.3.2 The market town of Monmouth is situated at the confluence of the Rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye, close to the Welsh border and adjacent to the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB's western edge. The town's castle, listed buildings, Norman bridge and Roman roads, all reflect its historic value. It is overlooked and sheltered by a number of partly accessible woodlands including Buckholt Wood, Hayes Coppices and Kingswood.

4.3.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Fiddler's Elbow National Nature Reserve (to the east) and Wonastow SINC.
- Accessible natural greenspace sites such as the Chippenham Recreational Ground in the centre of Monmouth, Vauxhall Fields, the Claypatch Wood, and the Millennium Field/allotment site adjacent to the River Wye.
- Public Rights of Way, included the promoted Wysis Way and Peregrine Path, and the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and Wye Valley Walk long distance path. There are also a number of locally promoted circular walks.



GI Opportunities

4.3.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Monmouth through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.3**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

1. Improve provision and access to natural and semi-natural greenspace, particularly to the north of the town.
2. Ensure tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed, and ensure sensitive management of grassland verges along the A40 corridor.
3. Improve both ecological and pedestrian/cycle linkages of the disused viaduct with other nearby semi-natural habitats to further bolster corridors through the settlement.
4. Form ecological links between the central extensive green corridor dominated by the Rivers Wye and Monnow and other smaller habitat corridors (such as the Watery Lane watercourse, semi-improved grassland and ancient woodlands to the west of the settlement).
5. Form ecological links between the ditch, semi-improved grassland and woodland habitat in and around Wonastow Industrial estate.
6. Form ecological links between the northern tip of the Clawdd du ditch and the Wonastow road ditch, as well as improving connectivity between these sections of ditch and Drybridge pond and the 'fire station woodland' to the north.
7. Form ecological links between the western end of the Wonastow Road ditch and semi-improved grassland and St Dial's wood to the south. Opportunity to increase access to the MCC owned part of St. Dials Wood.
8. Form ecological links between Wonastow Field SINC and the ditch and semi-improved grassland to the south and Watery Lane to the north.

9. Improve and extend the Wye Valley Walk to make it accessible all the way from the Boat House to the Church
10. Consider opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Monmouth Leasbrook, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people, and ecological connections for wildlife.

4.3.5 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Form links between the variety of small additional habitat patches scattered across the settlement.
- Improve the quality and value of open spaces in Monmouth.
- Improve the quality and value of natural and semi-natural greenspace sites in Monmouth.
- Ensure a buffer of semi-natural habitat with adjacent fields and the built urban landscape; and connect with near-by areas of semi-natural habitat where possible along the major river corridors. Extend this to include smaller watercourses, many of which are culverted through the residential zones of Monmouth.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected.
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where feasible or appropriate.
- Carry out works to prevent the loss of the Wye Valley Walk to bank and flood erosion along the Wye, whilst protecting sensitive habitats.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Continue to progress projects to improve pedestrian/cycle links between Wyesham and Monmouth, including the Iron Bridge and Beyond Cycle Link Project
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites such as Chippenham Field.

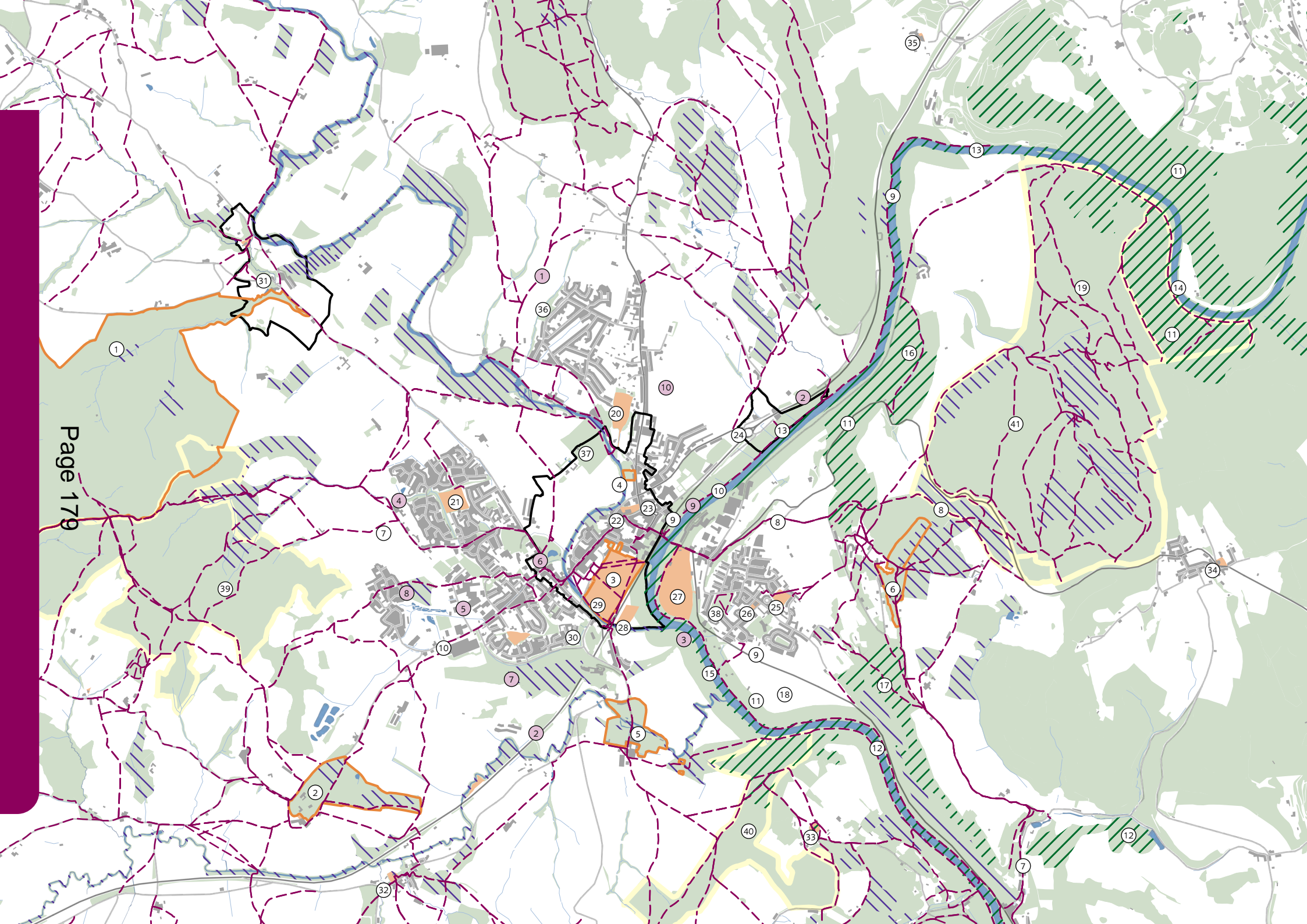











DIAGRAM 4.3 Monmouth GI Network Plan

GI Assets

-  Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
-  Statutory Biodiversity Designations
-  Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
-  Watercourses/Waterbodies
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Conservation Area
-  Public Open Space
-  Country Park
-  Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
-  Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

11. Wye Valley Woodlands/Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy (Wales) SAC
12. Wye Valley Woodlands (England) SAC
13. River Wye/Afon Gwy (Wales) SAC
14. Upper Wye Gorge SSSI
15. River Wye (Lower Wye)/Afon Gwy (Gwy Isaf) SSSI
16. Fiddler's Elbow SSSI & National Nature Reserve
17. Harper's Grove-Lord's Grove SSSI
18. Livox Wood SSSI
19. Lady Park Wood National Nature Reserve (& Other Stat Access Land)

Historic Parks & Gardens

1. The Hendre, Llangattock-vibon-Avel
2. Wonastow Court
3. Chippenham Recreation Ground
4. Chapel House, Monmouth
5. Troy House, Monmouth
6. The Kymin

Public Open Space

20. Osbaston Cemetery
21. Rockfield Recreation Ground
22. St Mary's Church, Monmouth
23. Sports Facility
24. St Peter's Church, Monmouth
25. Playing Field, Wyesham
26. St James's Church, Wyesham
27. Sports Field
28. Allotments
29. Chippenham Recreation Ground & Sports Ground
30. Elstob Way Play Space
31. St Cenedlon's Church, Rockfield
32. St Michael's Church, Mitchel Troy
33. Penallt Old Church, Penallt
34. Other Sports Facility
35. St Swithin's Church, Gararew

Other Open Spaces

36. Lancaster Way Open Space
37. Vauxhall Field Amenity Green Space
38. Wyesham Road Community Woodland

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

19. Lady Park Wood National Nature Reserve
39. Kings Wood
40. Livox Wood, Troypark Wood, Troy Orles and Church Hill Common
41. Lady Park Wood NNR & Highmeadow Woods (including Redding's Inclosure)

Promoted Routes

7. Offa's Dyke Path National Trail
8. Wysis Way
9. Wye Valley Walk
10. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 423

GI Opportunities

- ① Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details

4.4 Chepstow

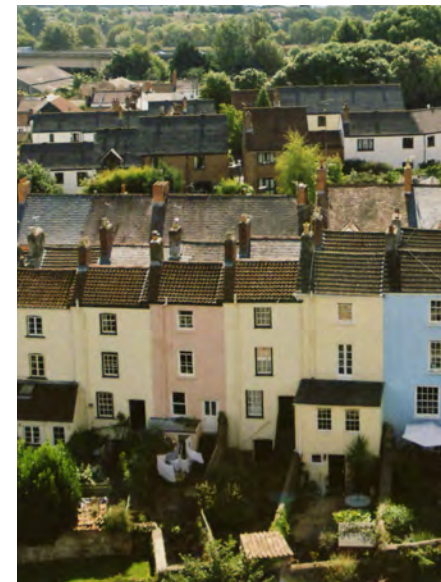
GI Assets

4.4.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around Chepstow are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.4**).

4.4.2 The historic market town of Chepstow, once a wealthy port, is located on steeply sloping land at the mouth of the Wye Valley, immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB. The historic core of the town is centred around the castle, which overlooks the River Wye. The Wye meanders past Chepstow's eastern edge, eventually merging with the River Severn/Severn Estuary (designated as a SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar) directly to the south of the town. Accessible woodlands including St Pierre's Great Wood and Great Barnets Wood are located to the west/north-west of the town.

4.4.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Accessible natural greenspaces within the town such as Warren Slade and Park Redding Woods and Bulwark Road Open Space.
- Public Rights of Way and the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, Wye Valley Walk long distance path and Wales Coast Path.
- Piercefield Park, a designated historic park/garden to the north of Chepstow. Although mainly in private ownership, it is partly accessible by rights of way and an access agreement.



GI Opportunities

4.4.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Chepstow through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.4**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

1. Continue to improve accessible greenspace access through opportunities generated by ongoing new development adjacent to the River Wye.
2. Improve accessible greenspace access for the centre of Chepstow adjoining the River Wye, where access to the river is limited.
3. Form or strengthen ecological links between the discrete groups of trees/ woodland scattered in and around Hardwick with one another
4. Form or strengthen ecological links between Parc Penterry grassland SINC to the north-west and Beaufort Quarry wood to the south east.
5. Form or strengthen ecological links between Parc Penterry SINC and Cockshoot Wood to its north west via enhanced connectivity with a strip of additional habitat patches (semi-improved grassland and trees) located mid-way between the two main habitat blocks.
6. Form or strengthen ecological links between Cockshoot Wood and Fryth Wood to its north.
7. Form or strengthen ecological links between Chepstow Racecourse grassland SINC to include additional patches of semi-improved grassland to the east and west, and beyond to the River Wye woodland corridor to the east and Fryth Wood to the west.
8. Form or strengthen ecological links between groups of trees/woodland patches near the outskirts of Chepstow town, and the railway and River corridor.
9. Consider landscape mitigation of parking by increasing tree planting where appropriate in the Chepstow Conservation Area¹.

¹ See Chepstow Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Proposals (2016) for more details

10. Consider opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Mounton Road Chepstow, such as provision of pedestrian/ cycle links and greenspaces for people, and ecological connections for wildlife.
- 4.4.5 Other general GI opportunities are:
- Improve the quality and value of amenity greenspaces in Chepstow.
 - Where appropriate, improve the quality of natural and semi-natural greenspace sites in and around the town.
 - Improve the quality and value, where appropriate, of the cemeteries and churchyards in Chepstow.
 - Strengthen the railway and motorway corridors, ensuring tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
 - Improving cycle links, including considering a route connecting Chepstow to the Wye Valley.
 - Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
 - Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features.
 - Ensure blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
 - Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
 - Ensure a buffer of semi-natural habitat with adjacent fields and the built urban landscape and connect with near-by areas of semi-natural habitat where possible along the River Wye corridor.
 - Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups
 - Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Areas.
 - Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
 - Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites.
 - Tree planting to improve air quality

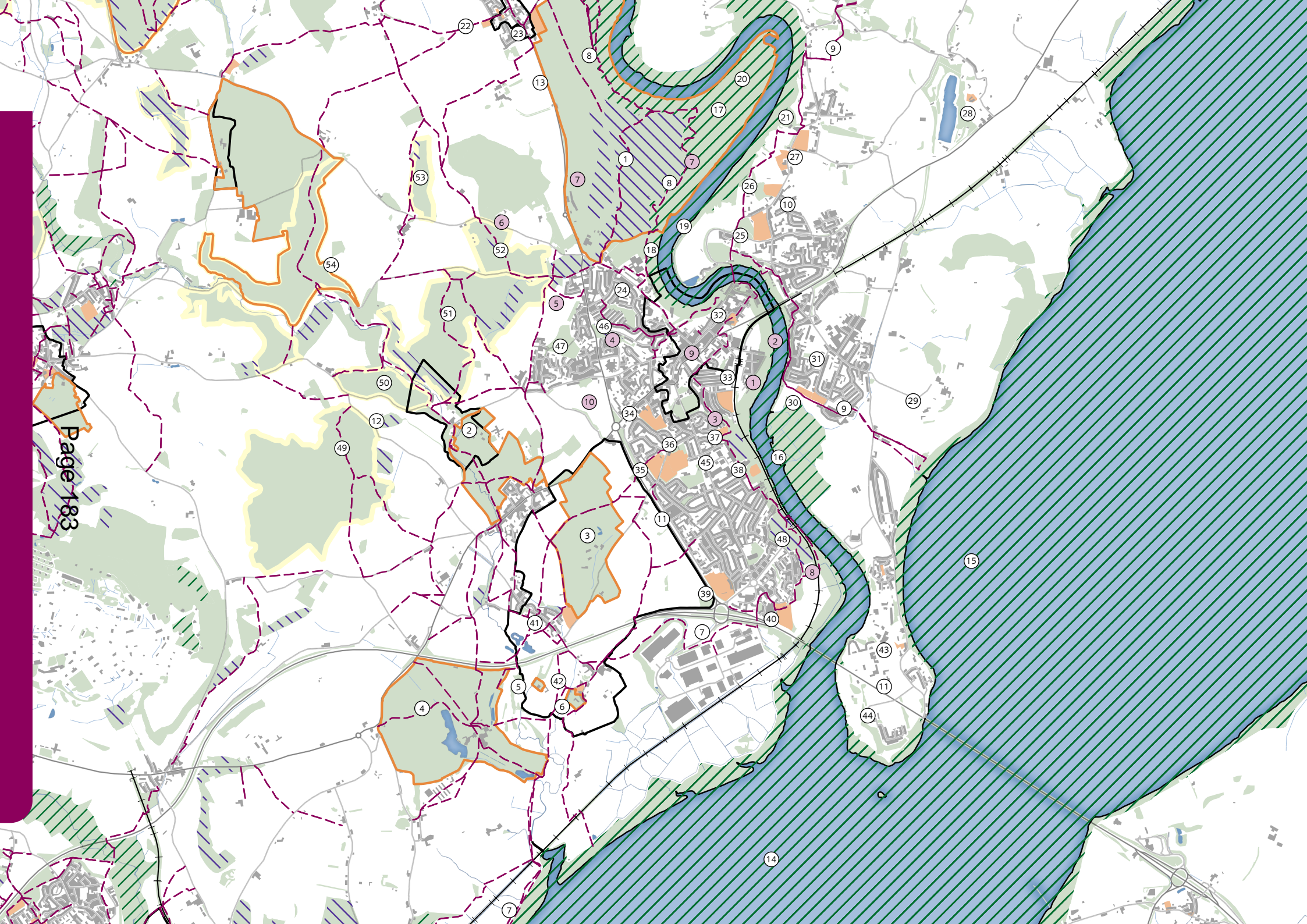












DIAGRAM 4.4 Chepstow GI Network Plan

GI Assets

-  Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
-  Statutory Biodiversity Designations
-  Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
-  Watercourses/Waterbodies
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Conservation Area
-  Public Open Space
-  Country Park
-  Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
-  Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

14. Severn Estuary Wales SPA/SAC/SSSI/Ramsar
15. Severn Estuary (England) SPA/SAC/SSSI/Ramsar
16. River Wye (Lower Wye)/Afon Gwy (Gwy Isaf) SSSI
17. Pierce, Alcove & Piercefield Woods SSSI
18. River Wye (Wales)/Afon Gwy (Wales) SAC
19. River Wye (England) SAC
20. Wye Valley Woodlands/Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy (Wales) SAC
21. Wye Valley Woodlands (England) SAC

Historic Parks & Gardens

1. Piercefield Park
2. Mounon House, Mathern
3. Wyelands
4. St Pierre Park
5. Moynes Court, Mathern
6. Mathern Palace

Public Open Space

22. King George's Playing Field
23. Playing Field, St Arvan's
24. Sports Ground & Playing Field, Chepstow Comprehensive School & Leisure Centre
25. Play Space & Playing Field, Coleford Road, Tutshill
26. Recreation Ground, Coleford Road
27. St Luke's Church & Playing Field
28. St Mary's & St Peter's Church, Tidenham
29. Sedbury Park
30. Football Field & Allotments on Buttington Road, Sedbury
31. Play Space, Buttington Road (near Offa's Mead Primary School)
32. St Mary's Church, Chepstow
33. Sports Field, Severn Crescent, (is this Hardwick Playing Pitch in previous study?)
34. Chepstow Town AFC
35. Cemetery, Mathern Road
36. Chepstow Athletic Club
37. Allotments (off Strongbow Road)
38. The Bulwarks
39. Chepstow Rugby Club & Playing Field
40. Playing Field on Tenby Lane

41. Playing Field, Newton Green
42. St Tewdrig's Church, Merthyr Tewdrig/Mathern
43. Religious Grounds, Beachley Barracks
44. Sports Ground, Beachley Point
45. Bulwark Bowl Skate Park, Bulwark Road
46. Huntfield Road Open Space
47. Woolpitch Wood Open Space
48. Warren Slade & Park Redding Woods

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

49. St Pierre's Great Woods
50. Kite's Bushes/Ticken Hill
51. Great Barnets Wood
52. Cockshoot Wood
53. Brier's Grove
54. Yewtree Wood

Promoted Routes

7. Wales Coastal Path
8. Wye Valley Walk
9. Offa's Dyke Path National Trail
10. Gloucestershire Way
11. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 4
12. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 42
13. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 31

GI Opportunities

- ① Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details

4.5 Severnside Settlements

GI Assets

4.5.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around the Severnside Settlements are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**).

4.5.2 The Severnside Settlements (which includes Caerwent, Crick, Magor and Undy, Rogiet, Caldicot, Portskewett and Sudbrook) is located immediately north of the Severn Estuary. The latter is designated as a Ramsar, SSSI, SPA and SAC, reflecting the estuary's high nature conservation value. The area comprises a number of woodlands, some accessible (e.g. Thicket Wood and Ifton Great Wood to the north of Rogiet).

4.5.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Nature Reserves such as Magor Marsh.
- The Wales Coast Path, St Tewdrig's Trail, and locally promoted circular walks.
- Accessible natural greenspaces such as Harold Park, Caldicot Castle Country Park, the Nedern Brook Wetlands SSSI and Magor/Undy Gwent Levels SSSI.
- Rogiet Countryside Park and Black Rock.



GI Opportunities

Magor & Undy

4.5.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Magor and Undy through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

1. Improve access to larger greenspaces for the eastern areas of Magor.
2. Strengthen the St Bride's Brook / Mill Reen corridor through the creation / management of semi-natural habitat buffers with adjacent fields and the built urban landscape, and to connect with other near-by areas of semi-natural habitat where possible.
3. Form or strengthen ecological links between Upper Grange grassland SINC with the St Brides Brook to its west, and linking the woodland/semi-improved grassland by Rockfield Farm to the M48 verge corridor to its north, as well as to additional habitat patches (trees/scrub) by Vinegar Hill Farm to its south west.
4. Form or strengthen ecological links between the woodland blocks near Vinegar Hill to each other and to the primary route of connectivity via a connection to woodland to the north, St Bride's.
5. Form or strengthen ecological links between St Bride's Brook / Mill Reen to the west, and the green corridor of the railway to the south.
6. Form or strengthen ecological links between small groups of trees/scrub, as well as linking them to the main routes of connectivity, i.e. the B4245 corridor to the east and woodland strip to the west, in the vicinity of Magor Brewery.

4.5.5 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Improve the quality and value of amenity greenspace in Magor and Undy, where appropriate.
- Improve the quality and value of natural and semi-natural greenspace sites in and around the settlements, where appropriate.
- Improve connectivity to the wider landscape, both in terms of access and ecological connectivity, which is currently limited for Magor and Undy due to the settlements being bounded by roads and railway.
- Investigate the potential for a number of new greenways/cycle routes linking the Severnside settlements to one another and beyond
- Strengthen the railway and motorway green corridors, ensuring tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
- Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
- Identify the significance of culverts as barriers to wildlife dispersal and explore potential options for reducing their fragmentary effects.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features (particularly woodlands).
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Improve routes linking to the Wales Coastal Path for education, and connectivity with landscape, biodiversity and history.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area.
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites.

Rogiet

4.5.6 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Rogiet through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

7. Improve the quality and value of the green corridor in Ifton Lane.
8. Form or strengthen ecological links between the series of small groups of trees stretching north-south between the M48 and the railway corridors to the east of Rogiet.

4.5.7 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Improve the quality and value of smaller amenity greenspace sites in the village.
- Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
- Improve connectivity to the wider landscape, both in terms of access and ecological connectivity, which is currently limited for Rogiet as the settlement is bounded by roads and railway.
- Investigate the potential for a number of new greenways/cycle routes linking the Severnside settlements to one another and beyond
- Strengthen the railway and motorway corridors, ensuring tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features (particularly woodlands).
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.

- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area.
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites.

Caldicot

4.5.8 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Caldicot through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

9. Improve the quality and value of the natural and semi-natural greenspace site (Caldicot Pill Nature Reserve) adjacent to the town.
10. Strengthen the Nedern Brook corridor, which is the main semi-natural corridor through the settlement, identifying the significance of the culverts as barriers to wildlife dispersal and exploring potential options for reducing their fragmentary effect.
11. Form or strengthen links between the block of woodland and ponds off Dewstow Road (north-west part of the settlement) and the M48 road verge corridor to its south.
12. Form or strengthen links between patches of trees adjacent to the Nedern Brook corridor, north of Caldicot Castle.
13. Consider opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Caldicot East, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people, and ecological connections for wildlife.

4.5.9 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Improve the value of churchyard and cemetery sites in Caldicot.
- Improve connectivity to the wider landscape, both in terms of access and ecological connectivity, which is currently limited for Caldicot as the settlement is bounded by roads and railway.
- Investigate the potential for a number of new greenways/cycle routes linking the Severnside settlements to one another and beyond

- Strengthen the railway and motorway corridors: ensure tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features (particularly woodlands).
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Improve the quality and value of amenity greenspaces in Caldicot.
- Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area.
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites.

Portskewett and Sudbrook

4.5.10 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Portskewett & Sudbrook through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

14. Investigate potential access to currently inaccessible greenspaces sites north of Portskewett.
15. Form or strengthen ecological links across the northern half of the settlement, most significantly in relation to the clusters of ASNW SINC's centred on Portskewett Hill, which could be linked to each other and to the railway corridor (to the south), Bushy Close SSSI and Withy Bed woodland (to the east).

4.5.11 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Improve the quality and value of the amenity greenspaces in Portskewett and Sudbrook.
- Improve the quality of the natural and semi-natural greenspaces around the settlements.
- Improve connectivity to the wider landscape, both in terms of access and ecological connectivity, which is limited for Portskewett and Sudbrook as the settlements are bounded in places by roads and railway.
- Investigate the potential for a number of new greenways/cycle routes linking the Severnside settlements to one another and beyond
- Strengthen the railway and motorway corridors, ensuring tree lines and hedgerows are well connected and sensitively managed.
- Ensure ongoing sensitive management of grassland verges.
- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features (particularly woodlands).
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred.
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites

Caerwent and Crick

4.5.12 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Caerwent and Crick through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.5**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

16. Develop and manage existing habitat corridors, such as between/through Cross-voel Wood, and Upper and Lower Rodge Wood (SINCs)

4.5.13 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features (particularly woodlands).
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Investigate the potential for a number of new greenways/cycle routes linking the Severnside settlements to one another and beyond
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups.
- Street tree planting in areas where losses have occurred, especially in the Conservation Area.
- Tree planting in low value amenity space, including species for community orchards and pollinators.
- Interpretation to identify links and loops from key sites.

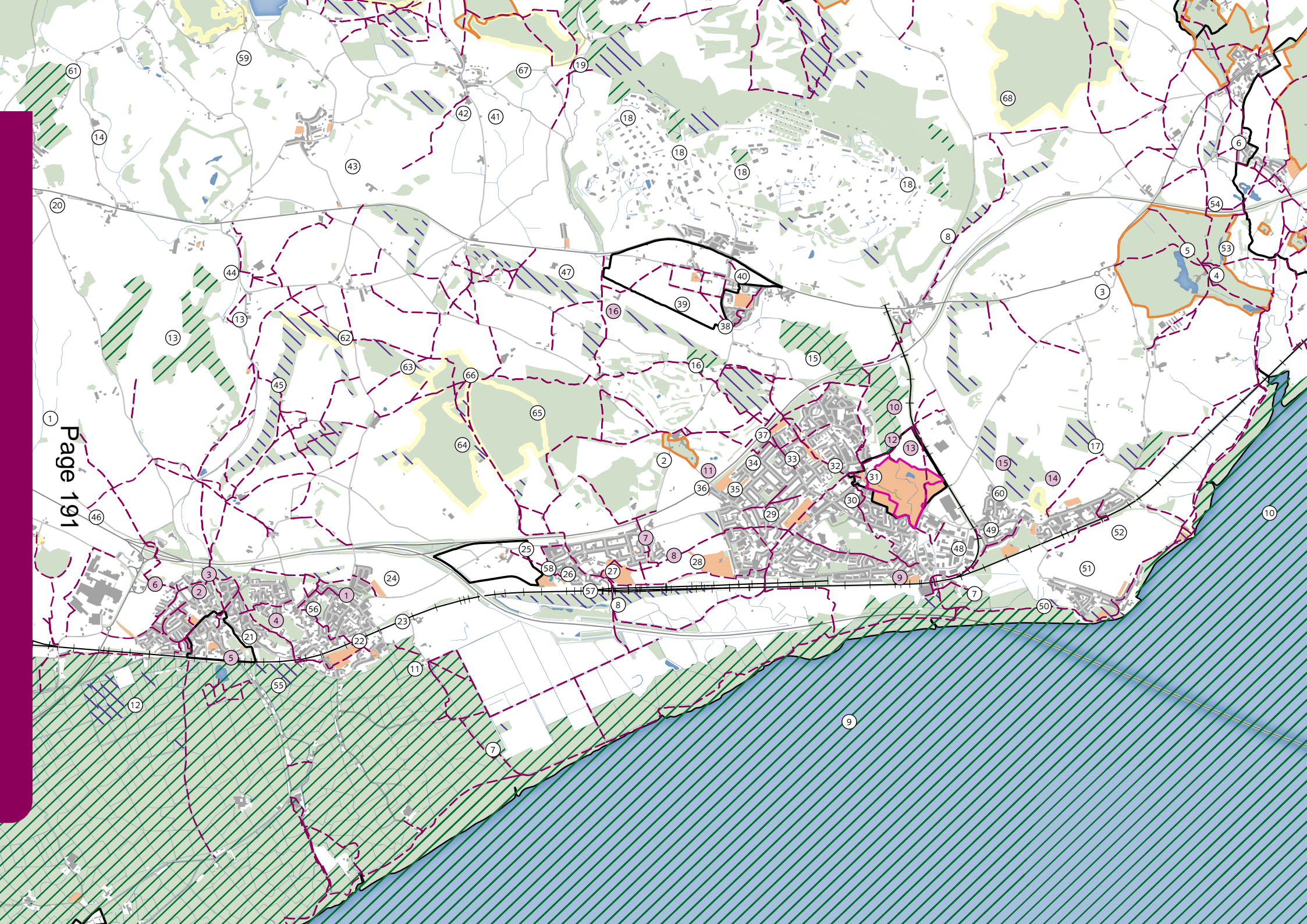


DIAGRAM 4.5 Severnside Settlements GI Network Plan**GI Assets**

-  Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
-  Statutory Biodiversity Designations
-  Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
-  Watercourses/Waterbodies
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Conservation Area
-  Public Open Space
-  Country Park
-  Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
-  Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

9. Severn Estuary Wales SPA/SAC/SSSI/Ramsar
10. Severn Estuary England SPA/SAC/SSSI/Ramsar
11. Gwent Levels - Magor & Undy SSSI
12. Gwent Levels - Redwick & Llandeenny SSSI
13. Penhow Woodland SSSI & National Nature Reserve
14. Parc Seymour Woods SSSI
15. Nedern Brook Wetlands SSSI
16. Brockwells Meadows SSSI
17. Bushy Close SSSI
18. Dinham Meadows SSSI
19. Coombe Valley Woods SSSI

Historic Parks & Gardens

1. Pencoed Castle
2. Dewstow House
3. St Pierre Park
4. Mathern Place
5. Moynes Court, Mathern
6. Wyelands

Public Open Space

20. Rockfield Close Recreation Ground
21. St Mary's Church, Magor
22. Playing Field on The Ramp, Undy
23. St Mary's Church, Undy
24. Allotments
25. Religious Grounds, The Old Court, Llanfihangel
26. St Mary's Church, Rogiet
27. Rogiet Playing Fields
28. Caldicott Rugby Club
29. King George's Field, Bowling Green & Allotments
30. Caldicott Leisure Centre Playing Fields
31. Caldicott Castle & Country Park
32. St Mary's Church, Caldicott
33. Playing Fields, St Mary's School, Caldicott
34. Religious Grounds, Nedder Way, Caldecott
35. Playing Fields, Green Lane, Caldecott
36. Cemetery & Allotments, Dewstow Road
37. Allotments
38. Caerwent Playing Fields, St Tathan's Place
39. St Stephen's Church, Caerwent
40. Play Space, Lawrence Crescent, Caerwent
41. Play Space, Llanfair-Discoed
42. St Mary's Church, Llanfair-Discoed
43. Playing Field & St Dubritous Church, Llanvaches
44. St John the Baptist Church, Penhow
45. St Bridget's Church, St Bride's Netherwent

46. St Mary's Church, Wilcrick
47. Playing Field, Trewen
48. Portskewett Recreation Ground
49. St Mary's Church, Portskewett
50. Playing Field & Play Space, Sudbrook
51. Allotments, Sudbrook
52. Black Rock Picnic Site
53. St Tewdrick's Church, Merthyr Twedrig
54. Playing Field, Newton Green

Other Open Spaces

55. Magor Marsh
56. Mill Common
57. Rogiet Countryside Park
58. Starling Close Amenity Greenspace

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

59. Myndd Alltir-fach (Common Land)
60. Stow Ball Hill (Common Land)
61. Wentwood
62. Coed y Mynydd
63. Upper Seven Acres
64. Thicket Wood
65. Slade Wood
66. Lower Seven Acres
67. Cuhere Wood
68. St Pierre's Great Woods

Promoted Routes

7. Wales Coastal Path
8. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 4

GI Opportunities

- ① Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details

4.6 Usk

GI Assets

4.6.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around Usk are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.6**).

4.6.2 Usk is a secondary settlement in the west of Monmouthshire, surrounded by farmland and woodland. The River Usk flows through the village, and the Usk Valley Walk follows its route.

4.6.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Cefn Ila Park and Garden
- Llanbadoc Island Access Land, adjacent to the River Usk
- Allotments
- Various sports clubs and recreation grounds
- Multiple churchyards



GI Opportunities

4.5.14 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Usk through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.6**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

1. Usk Trail Action Group cycleway proposal along old railway line
2. Improvements to Usk Valley Walk and other local paths to make them more accessible.
3. Potential to create an Usk to Pontypool or Usk Railway path.
4. Improve the quality of the allotments.

4.5.15 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features. (Not mapped)
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate.
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed.
- Increase access to inaccessible greenspace sites, where appropriate.
- Where appropriate, improve the quality of amenity greenspaces in Usk.
- Where appropriate, improve the quality of natural and semi-natural greenspaces in Usk.
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', of similar groups.

DIAGRAM 4.6 Usk GI Network Plan
GI Assets

- Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
- Statutory Biodiversity Designations
- Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
- Watercourses/Waterbodies
- Historic Parks & Gardens
- Conservation Area
- Public Open Space
- Country Park
- Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
- Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

- 5. Usk Valley/Afon Wysg SAC
- 6. River Usk (Lower Usk)/Afon Wysg (Wysg Isaf) SSSI

Historic Parks & Gardens

- 1. Cefn Ila, Llanbadoc

Public Open Space

- 7. Rugby Field, Coleg Gwent, Usk Campus
- 8. The Island Recreation Ground
- 9. Allotments (on A472)
- 10. Usk Rugby Football Club
- 11. Recreation Ground, Maryport Street
- 12. Usk Athletic Club
- 13. St Madoc's Church, Llanbadoc
- 14. Llanbadoc Island Play Park

- 15. Priory Church of St Mary, Usk
- 16. St Francis Xavier & St David Lewis Catholic Church
- 17. Allotments on Monmouth Road

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

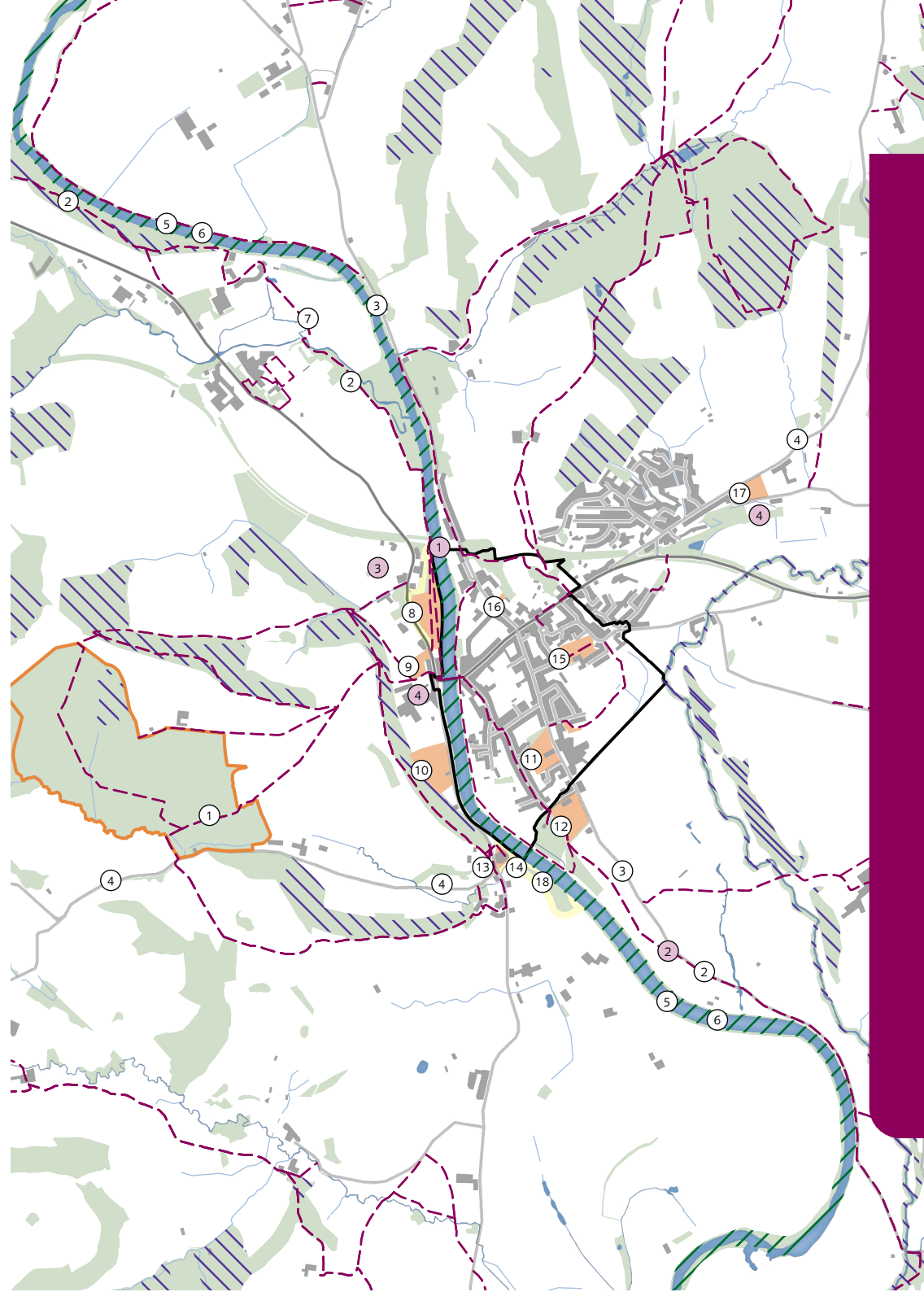
- 18. Llanbadoc Island

Promoted Routes

- 2. Usk Valley Walk
- 3. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 42
- 4. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 423

GI Opportunities

- Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details



4.7 Raglan

GI Assets

4.7.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around Raglan are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.7**).

4.7.2 Raglan is a secondary settlement in the centre of Monmouthshire, surrounded by farmland. The Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 423 runs through the centre of the settlement, which is bounded to the north by the A40. The small watercourse Nant y Wilcae flows to the south of the village.

4.7.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Raglan Castle and Historic Park and Garden
- Allotments between Usk Road and the High Street
- Playing Field on Station Road



GI Opportunities

4.6.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Raglan through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.7**). The key GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

1. Opportunity to develop Raglan 'Local ways' and health walks, eg. 'Healthy Footsteps Walk'

4.6.5 Other general GI opportunities are:

- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features. (Not mapped)
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate. (Not mapped)
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed. (Not mapped)
- Increase provision of or access to larger accessible greenspace sites. (Not mapped)
- Improve the quality of the natural and semi-natural greenspaces around the settlements and public rights of way. (Not mapped)
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', of similar groups
- Ensure pond networks are sensitively managed for Great Crested Newts
- Tree planting for landscape character and biodiversity - field and hedgerow oaks are not being replaced as they die off.

DIAGRAM 4.7 Raglan GI Network Plan

GI Assets

- Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
- Statutory Biodiversity Designations
- Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
- Watercourses/Waterbodies
- Historic Parks & Gardens
- Conservation Area
- Public Open Space
- Country Park
- Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
- Public Right of Way

Historic Parks & Gardens

1. Raglan Castle

Public Open Space

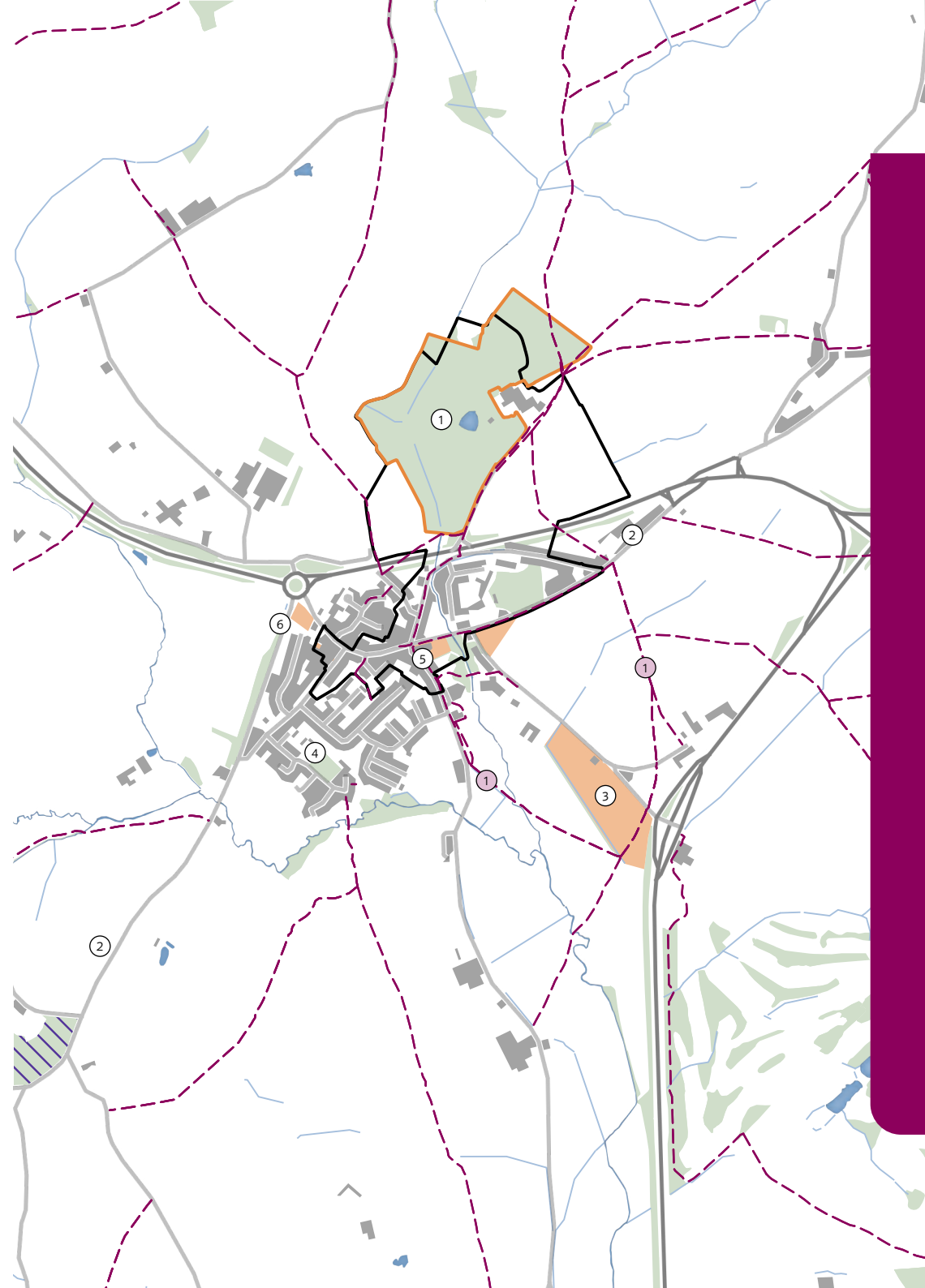
3. Playing Field, Station Road
4. Play Space on Prince Charles Road/Hoel Y Tywysog Siarl
5. The Church of St Cadoc
6. Allotments between Usk Road and High Street

Promoted Routes

2. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 423

GI Opportunities

- ① Green Infrastructure Opportunities - see text for details



4.8 Penperlleni

GI Assets

4.8.1 The existing GI assets that provide the GI network in and around Penperlleni are shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.8**).

4.8.2 Penperlleni is a secondary settlement in the west of Monmouthshire, surrounded by farmland and woodland. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal lies approximately 0.5km to the west of the settlement.

4.8.3 Other key GI assets include:

- Areas of NRW Public Forest, including Wern Fawr to the north
- Churchyards at St Illtyd, Mamhilad; St Peter's, Goetre and Saron Baptist Church
- Playing Fields



GI Opportunities

4.7.4 Key opportunities for strengthening the GI network in and around Penperlleni through the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of existing GI assets are also shown on the GI Network Plan (see **Diagram 4.8**). The GI opportunities that would deliver the most significant benefits for people and wildlife are considered to be:

- Ensure hedgerows are sensitively managed and well-connected with the wider hedgerow network and other semi-natural habitat features. (Not mapped)
- Ensure current blocks of semi-natural habitat and protected sites are sensitively managed and their extent increased where appropriate. (Not mapped)
- Ensure ditches are sensitively managed. (Not mapped)
- Increase public access to/provision of natural and semi-natural greenspace in and around the settlement. (Not mapped)
- Management of community spaces by 'friends of', or similar groups

DIAGRAM 4.8 Penperlleni GI Network Plan

GI Assets

- Natural or Semi-natural Greenspace
- Statutory Biodiversity Designations
- Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
- Watercourses/Waterbodies
- Historic Parks & Gardens
- Conservation Area
- Public Open Space
- Country Park
- Open Access Land (CRoW Act)
- Public Right of Way

Statutory Biodiversity Designations

- 3. River Usk SAC
- 4. River Usk (Lower Usk)/Afon Wysg (Wysg Isaf) SSSI

Public Open Space

- 5. The Church of St Illtyd, Mamhilad
- 6. Playing Field/Play Space on Fairfield/Park Y Brain Lane
- 7. Goytre AFC (Football Ground on Plough Road)
- 8. St Peter's Church, Goetre
- 9. Saron Baptist Church, Saron Road

Other Open Spaces

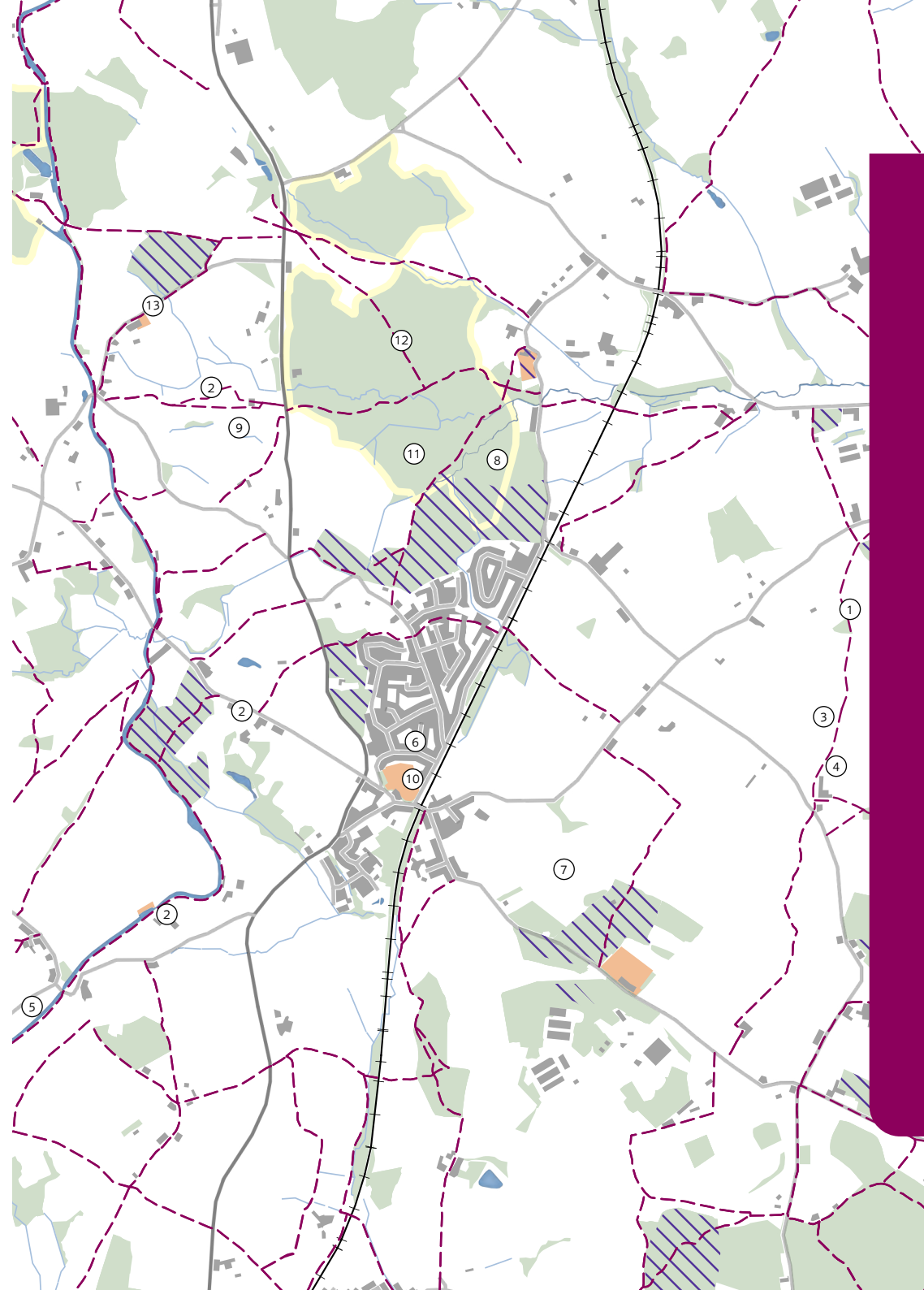
- 10. Goytre Fawr Primary School Playing Fields

Open Access Land (CRoW Act)

- 11. Wern Fawr
- 12. Llwh
- 13. Coed Mawr

Promoted Routes

- 1. Usk Valley Walk
- 2. Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 49



Appendices



a

Acknowledgements

Contributor acknowledgements

Monmouthshire County Council Steering Group

Colette Bosley Green Infrastructure Team Leader

Helen Fairbank Gwent Green Grid Collaboration Lead

CBA Consultant Team

Dominic Watkins Project Director

Harriet Stanford Project Co-ordinator

Kate Goodchild Project Technical Support

Stakeholders

See **Appendix C** for details

Image Acknowledgements

Front cover

IDS.photos

Key Messages

Alan Richards

1.0 Setting the Scene Flysheet

Michael Day

Page 10

Monmouthshire County Council

2.0 The GI Approach in Monmouthshire Flysheet

Monmouthshire County Council

Page 14

Allan Hopkins

Page 15

Andy Cardiff

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Monmouthshire County Council

Page 25 (left to right)

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3.0 Green Infrastructure Strategy Flysheet

Alan Richards

Page 36

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Linda Yarrow

4.0 Settlement Green Infrastructure Networks Flysheet

Google

Page 50 (clockwise from top left)

Gavin-S

Sitye3

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Colin Madge

Maigheach-gheal

Appendices Flysheet

Mike Erskine

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Robin Drayton

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A person with some photos

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GIS Database

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Notes:

The digital data used in this study represents currently available datasets.

The datasets have not been modified or enhanced, and their accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Datasets sourced from Natural England/Historic England have been used to enable identification of cross-border GI assets.

C

Stakeholder Consultation Record

Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Review

Internal stakeholders within Monmouthshire County Council were consulted to inform the review of Volume 1 (Strategic Framework) and Volume 2 (Delivery Plan) of the Strategy, in particular the updating of the Action Plan to reflect delivery of GI projects over the last 5 years.

MONMOUTHSHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP NOTE

Workshop 1

18th June 2018, County Hall, Usk

Attendees

Colette Bosley	Monmouthshire CC – Principal Green Infrastructure and Landscape Officer
Craig O'Connor	Monmouthshire CC – Development Management
Hazel Clatworthy	Monmouthshire CC – Policy and Performance
Jill Edge	Monmouthshire CC – Planning Policy
Judith Langdon	Monmouthshire CC – Community and Partnerships
Kate Stinchcombe	Monmouthshire CC – Senior Biodiversity Officer
Mark Davies	Monmouthshire CC – Highways
Matthew Gatehouse	Monmouthshire CC – Head of Policy and Performance
Matthew Lewis	Monmouthshire CC – GI & Countryside Manager
Mike Moran	Monmouthshire CC – GI & Countryside (Play & Recreation)
Nick Keyse	Monmouthshire CC – Estates
Nicola Edwards	Monmouthshire CC – Food and Tourism Manager
Nigel Leaworthy	Monmouthshire CC – Head of Grounds Maintenance
Ruth Rourke	Monmouthshire CC – PROW Team Leader
Sharran Lloyd	Monmouthshire CC – Community and Partnerships
Richard Barter	Monmouthshire Housing Association
Scott Thomas	Monmouthshire Housing Association
Andrew Nevill	Torfaen CBC – Senior Landscape Officer
Emily Finney	Welsh Government – Natural Resource Policy
Lisa Fiddes	Welsh Government – Inspector of Historic Areas
Siobhan Wiltshire	Welsh Government – Planning (Landscape and GI)
Fen Turner	Natural Resources Wales – Senior Planner
Tim Wroblewski	TACP (on behalf of Caerphilly CC)
Dominic Watkins	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Bill Wadsworth	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Harriet Stanford	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)

Purpose of Workshop 1

To engage stakeholder in identifying local strategic priorities for potential investment in Green Infrastructure.

Stakeholder Feedback

Discussion Group A (Facilitated by DW/HS)

- Landscape-scale projects:
 - Living Levels
 - RECS – Renewable Energy and Community Schemes
 - Wye Valley AONB
 - Flood Management and Habitat Creation/Natural Flood Risk Management
- The public value their landscape, countryside and green spaces in Monmouthshire
- Wellbeing and access to greenspace:
 - This needs to be wider than literal access
 - People who could most benefit are often missing out
 - Facilitate access to green spaces close to home rather than travelling to facilities further afield – there is a lack of public transport
- Habitat fragmentation
- What is the approach to connectivity?
- How does the GI Strategy link to other Strategies and Acts – for example the Active Travel Act and the Play Strategy?
- Public Rights of Way:
 - Need to be more functional with links to internal areas of settlements
 - What is the legibility of the connections
 - How useable are they? What state of maintenance
 - Shirenewton example – has good links to schools
 - Connections between where people live and work
 - Health walks – being addressed in the ROWIP. These facilitate GPs to be able to prescribe walks, and help GP referral walking groups
 - Healthy walking schemes and groups (eg. Raglan)
 - Promotion of these is important
 - Routes need to be easy to use and attractive
- Place-making agenda
- How to encourage people to be a part of maintenance etc – expand beyond the current demographic
- Air quality – using GI to mitigate
- Land management:
 - Biodiversity – managing MCC land for function
 - County farms – forward plans
 - Management of public sector land across the region
 - Engaging with the management of land beyond that usually managed for biodiversity/flood management etc. that is within public ownership (MCC/NRW etc)
- Pollinators need to be a priority – there are challenges in keeping the pollinators agenda in current thinking
- Living levels – integrate with current projects
- Wye Catchment Partnership – there are projects/advice etc going on within the English part of the AONB
- Natural flood risk management in the Brecon Beacons
- Raise awareness of management costs when embedding GI into new development – costs need to be sensible for tenants
- Education – in schools and elsewhere
- Breadth of user groups
- Brexit needs to be considered – including the impact of agriculture and sustainable land management. Local connections in the agricultural community. Welsh government consultation currently underway?
- Destination development plan – access to the countryside is part of the key offer
- Social Justice Strategy – access to greenspace
- MCC Corporate Plan
- AONB Management Plan – review – about to go into next cycle

Discussion Group B (Facilitated by BW/CB)

- Historic Theme:
 - Connectivity/links between historic assets
 - Links within settlements between greenspaces
- Wellbeing (Wellbeing Plan/Corporate Strategy):
 - Green/blue corridors for active travel
 - Ease of navigation of active travel
 - Food growing/healthy eating
 - Allotments
 - Local markets – delivering back to people
 - Mental health wellbeing
 - Health Impact Assessments
 - Promotion of access to GI – getting info to people to use assets
 - Availability of GIS info for local communities
 - Data Rationalisation
- Landscape-scale connectivity:
 - Needs and opportunities analysis for global response
 - Biodiversity and ecosystem services to underpin GI
 - Working at scale for resilience
- Ecosystem Services:
 - Flood risk in rural and urban centres
 - Farming – MCC landholding use for flood risk and control
 - Access – guiding people to high [NOx] without compensation
 - Monocropping
 - No hinterland
 - Ecosystem services analysis in terms of what GI assets can provide via, for example, management.
- Access:
 - Safe cycle routes
 - Additional access to GI
- Future Proofing:
 - Removal of toll = increased traffic/increased settlement, etc.
- Incentivising:
 - Packages/presentation to landowners
 - Online presence/info
 - Not just about best practice
 - Partnership working
- Tourism:
 - Destinations and interpretation of GI Assets/Value
 - Big/Inspiring Projects
 - Communication routes/access
 - Minimising impact
- Valuation:
 - Non-monetary valuation
 - Monetary valuation of GI to demonstrate value of GI investment
- Adaptability/Flexibility

Workshop 2

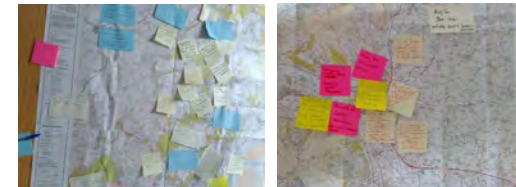
19th June 2018, Shire Hall, Monmouth

Attendees

Colette Bosley	Monmouthshire CC – Principal Green Infrastructure and Landscape Officer
Jill Edge	Monmouthshire CC – Planning Policy
Judith Langdon	Monmouthshire CC – Policy and Communications
Kate Stinchcombe	Monmouthshire CC – Senior Biodiversity Officer
Mark Cleaver	Monmouthshire CC – Grounds
Matthew Lewis	Monmouthshire CC – Countryside Manager
Ruth Rourke	Monmouthshire CC – PRoW Team Leader
Cllr Ann Webb	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr R.G. Roden	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr Tony Easson	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr Tony Konieczny	Abergavenny TC
Cllr Brian Counsell	Caerwent CC
Cllr Dave Evans	Caldicot TC
Peter Cloke	Natural Resources Wales
Andrew Blake	Wye Valley AONB
Neville Hart	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Nicola Bradbear	Bee Friendly Monmouthshire
Steph Tyler	Monmouthshire Meadows
Dominic Watkins	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Bill Wadsworth	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Harriet Stanford	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)

Purpose of Workshop 2

To engage stakeholders in identifying potential Green Infrastructure projects in and around the key settlements through an opportunity mapping exercise (as illustrated by extracts below).



Workshop 2
19th June 2018, Shire Hall, Monmouth

Attendees	
Colette Bosley	Monmouthshire CC - Principal Green Infrastructure and Landscape Officer
Jill Edge	Monmouthshire CC – Planning Policy
Judith Langdon	Monmouthshire CC – Policy and Communications
Kate Stinchcombe	Monmouthshire CC – Senior Biodiversity Officer
Mark Cleaver	Monmouthshire CC – Grounds
Matthew Lewis	Monmouthshire CC – Countryside Manager
Ruth Rourke	Monmouthshire CC – PRoW Team Leader
Cllr Ann Webb	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr R.G. Roden	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr Tony Easson	Monmouthshire CC
Cllr Tony Konieczny	Abergavenny TC
Cllr Brian Counsell	Caerwent CC
Cllr Dave Evans	Caldicot TC
Peter Cloke	Natural Resources Wales
Andrew Blake	Wye Valley AONB
Neville Hart	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Nicola Bradbear	Bee Friendly Monmouthshire
Steph Tyler	Monmouthshire Meadows
Dominic Watkins	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Bill Wadsworth	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)
Harriet Stanford	Chris Blandford Associates (Facilitators)

Purpose of Workshop 2

To engage stakeholders in identifying potential Green Infrastructure projects in and around the key settlements through an opportunity mapping exercise (as illustrated by extracts below).



Stakeholder Feedback

Abergavenny	
Wye Usk Foundation - 1yr project with farmers to improve banks/soil erosion and identify sites for habitat improvement	
Abergavenny Community Orchard	
Incredible Edible Abergavenny	
Mardy Park Environmental Group	
Gavenny Project - Castle Meadows. Confluence of Gavenny and Usk. Bank Management/Clearance. Management of Water Meadows. NRW, MCC, ATC. Volunteers - Friends of Castle Meadows. Abergavenny Civic Society	
Gavenny Project - Swan Meadow. East bank side could be developed as a wild flower meadow. Some habitat improvement undertaken by MCC	
Gavenny Project - Podcast. http://www.countryfile.com/podcast/wildlife-wildlife-stories/wade-welsh-river-search-wildlife	
KHS/Abergavenny Leisure Centre. 21st Century School Sport and Leisure Provision	
Friends of Castle Meadows - education and conservation work	
Possible - Introduction of Park Run - weekly 5k walk/run. Free event every Saturday	
Caerwent	
Limestone influenced habitats around MOD Land - Critical for rare biodiversity. Potential for greater partnership working.	
Introduction of Junior Park Run , weekly free event, 2k every Sunday morning	
King George Playing Fields Caldicot	
Chepstow	
Introduction of Park Run. Weekly 5k walk/run. Free event every Saturday morning.	
Chepstow School/Leisure centre. 21st Century School Sport and leisure provision.	
Piercefield House Circular Walk. Needs improving re-signage and replacing old stiles with KG. Some interpretation on-site would be beneficial for locals/tourists as lots of landscape/biodiversity/heritage	

Monmouth
Future project - Kingswood Area - pilot project demonstrating natural flood management techniques and benefits for water quality, flood reduction, biodiversity etc.
Some excellent sites include along the Monnow above Osbaston Forge, within Bridges Centre etc. Management is key. Ditto road verges. Native grassland beats annual beds.
Stop mowing some green spaces in Monmouth until August - then cut and remove
Introduction of junior park run - 2k run/walk every Sunday
Introduction of Park Run - 5k weekly run/walk - possible Chippenham Fields.
Erosion on bank of Wye Valley Walk at Monmouth
Cycle corridor south from Monmouth
Preserve Troy Gardens/Old Station/Wildlife/Eco
Community Woodland Claypatch Wyesham
Keep free of building houses [nb - highlight along east side of A466]
Save the Catalpa Tree [in St. James' Square]
Reduce run-off on hills in Osbaston. Planting in field E of Prospect Road - need landowner permission
Penperlleni
Goytre Wharf. NRW Woodland. NRW looking at how new paths for all abilities can be created, currently consulting with users.
Rogiet
NRW Slade Wood. Areas are managed for butterflies. Also management agreement with Gwent Wildlife Trust to look after meadows.
Usk
Incredible Edible Usk
Usk in Bloom

Other Locations
Buglife Bee-Lines. Includes coast and several corridors
Need to understand difference between desk-top study of rights of way and lived experience. (eg. RoW that are obstructed by nettles, mud, large cattle. etc)
Deer management is key aspect of enhancing the quality of Lower Wye Valley woodlands - hence future support is critical for woodland biodiversity
Connect Wentwood with Chepstow Park Wood (and then on to Wye Valley)
Wentwood - NRW working with Woodland Trust on improving access and reducing anti-social behaviour. Partnership Group including volunteers needs to take place.
NRW Chepstow Park Wood. NRW are working with access team to look at how access can be improved.
New Housing Developments - strategy for developers to provide bird boxes (swifts, sparrows etc) built into new estates. New GI for wildlife.
Nearly all NRW forestry land holding is open access and can be used for informal recreation
Woodland Trust - current PAWS restoration project. GIS. GWT involved.
GI and NFM on Wye tributaries Tintern to Penallt
Leasing county farms to conservation groups
Managing focussed landscapes for bats ('batscape') approach. Horseshoe bat SAC. 'Landscapes' around roosts.
Improve quality of hedgerow management. Follow practise recommended in Bee Friendly Monmouthshire - Hedgerow Manifesto
More careful mowing of Monmouthshire's verges. Training of contractors and operatives.
Stop mowing! Stop destroying hedgerows! These are crucial wildlife corridors and enhance the environment for everyone.
Stop glyphosate soaking every kerbside.
Avoid herbicide use in Monmouth and elsewhere
Veteran, ancient and future veteran trees need nurturing (and incentivising management/care)
SMS funded heathland restoration project pending stage 2 application (last lowland heathland around Trellech)
Connecting special wildlife sites and orchards, Monmouthshire meadows sites and tributaries and corridors throughout AONB
Drystone walls are key habitats and corridors
Flood plain restoration - reversion to grassland
Green Infrastructure Management Plans on countryside and 'attractions' sites
GWT - Over 400 LWS across Gwent. Owners supported, landowner days, GIS map collated.
Nature isn't neat. Pilot town to be decided. RDP - Pollinator Project



Potential to increase recreation and biodiversity/tourism in Wye Valley AONB area - issues with maintenance of county unclassified roads/users
Bread and cheese walk in bad state of repair. Private land. Rare landscape/plants

d

Green Infrastructure Assessment

d1

Green Infrastructure Assets

Natural and semi-natural greenspaces

Natural and semi-natural greenspaces (see **Diagram D1.1**) encompass a broad range of habitat types (see **Diagram D1.2**) that can be found both within (see **Diagram D1.3**) and outside designated wildlife sites, including:

- woodland & scrub
- grassland, heath and moor
- wetlands
- open/running water
- coast

In addition to supporting a range of habitats for wildlife, these natural and semi-natural greenspaces can also, where appropriate, provide managed access for informal recreation (such as walking and bird watching at Fiddler's Elbow and Cleddon Bog nature reserves and the surrounding undesignated or ancient woodlands, which are partially accessible).

Grasslands are concentrated in the northwest of the county, predominantly associated with the uplands, though there are scattered pockets elsewhere. Heath is also concentrated in the uplands in the northwest of the county. Monmouthshire has a high concentration of woodlands and watercourses scattered across the county, but with a particular concentration of woodlands in the Wye Valley and south of the county, and with a distinctive concentration of small watercourses in the Gwent Levels.

Information on the current condition of many of the designated sites is limited, however management plans for the European Sites demonstrate that a number of the sites are in unfavourable condition, and the Monmouthshire Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (2017) states that 'the extent and quality of habitats in the County is largely reducing'.

DIAGRAM D1.1 Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces

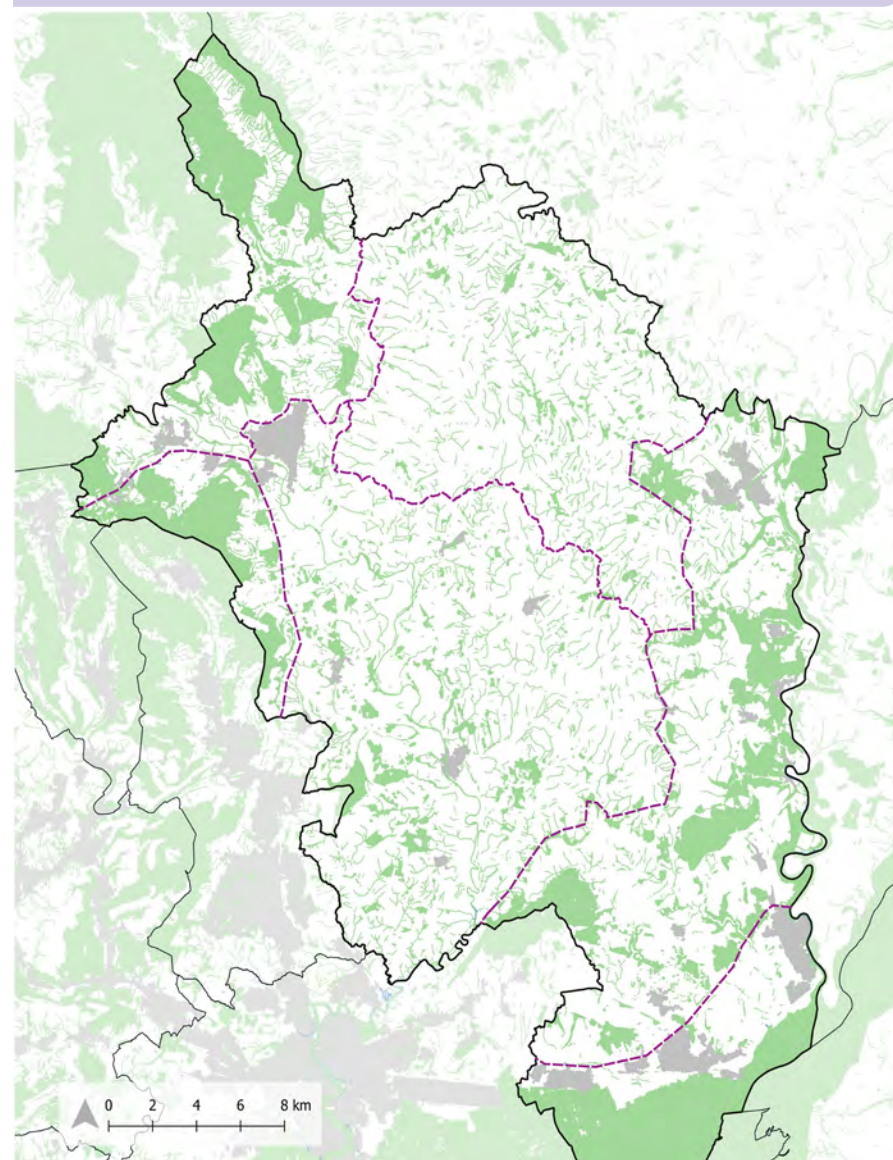


DIAGRAM D1.2 Habitats

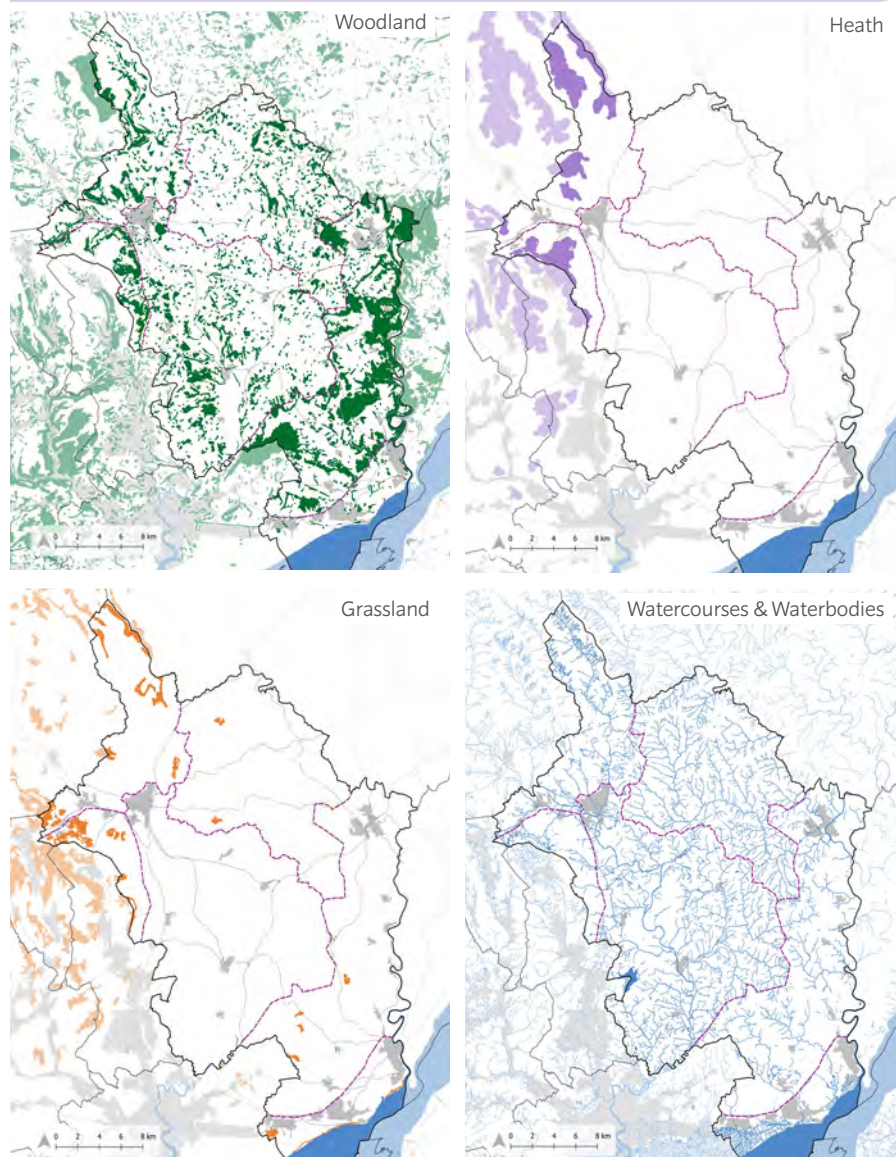
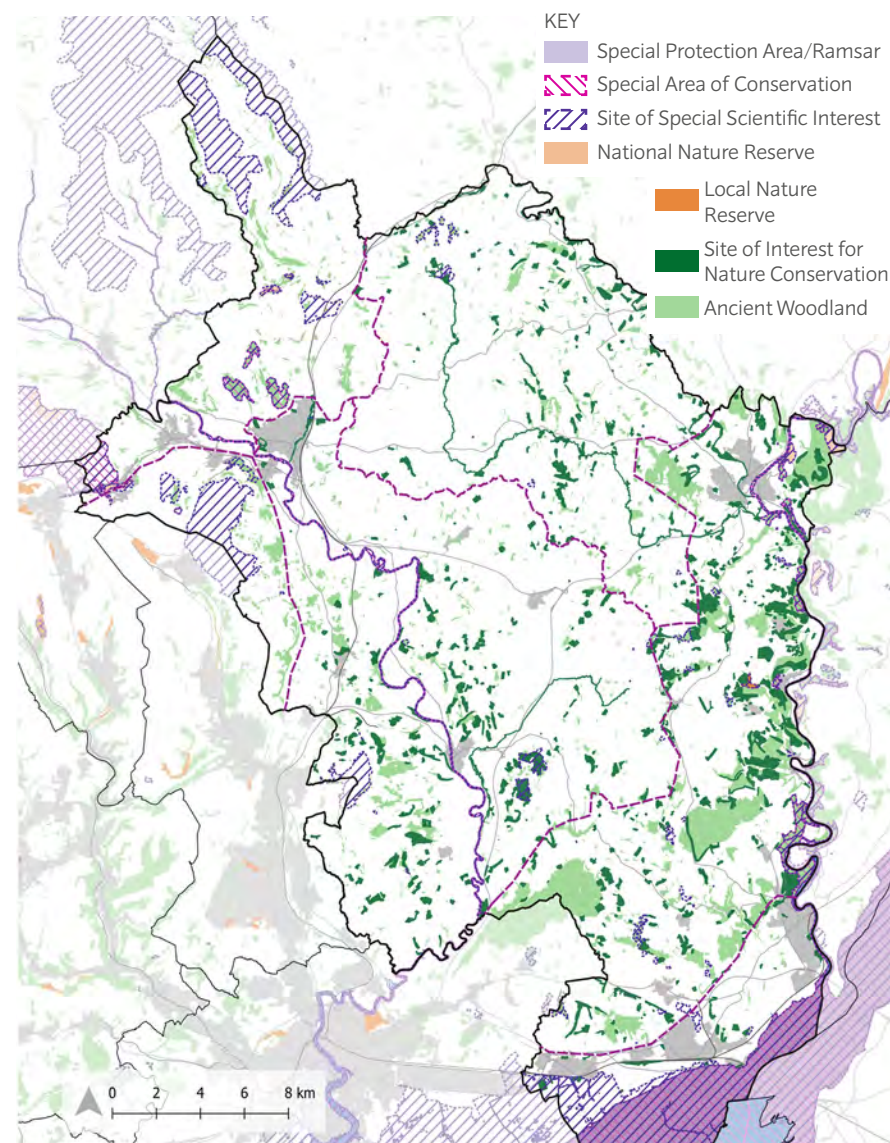


DIAGRAM D1.3 Biodiversity Designations

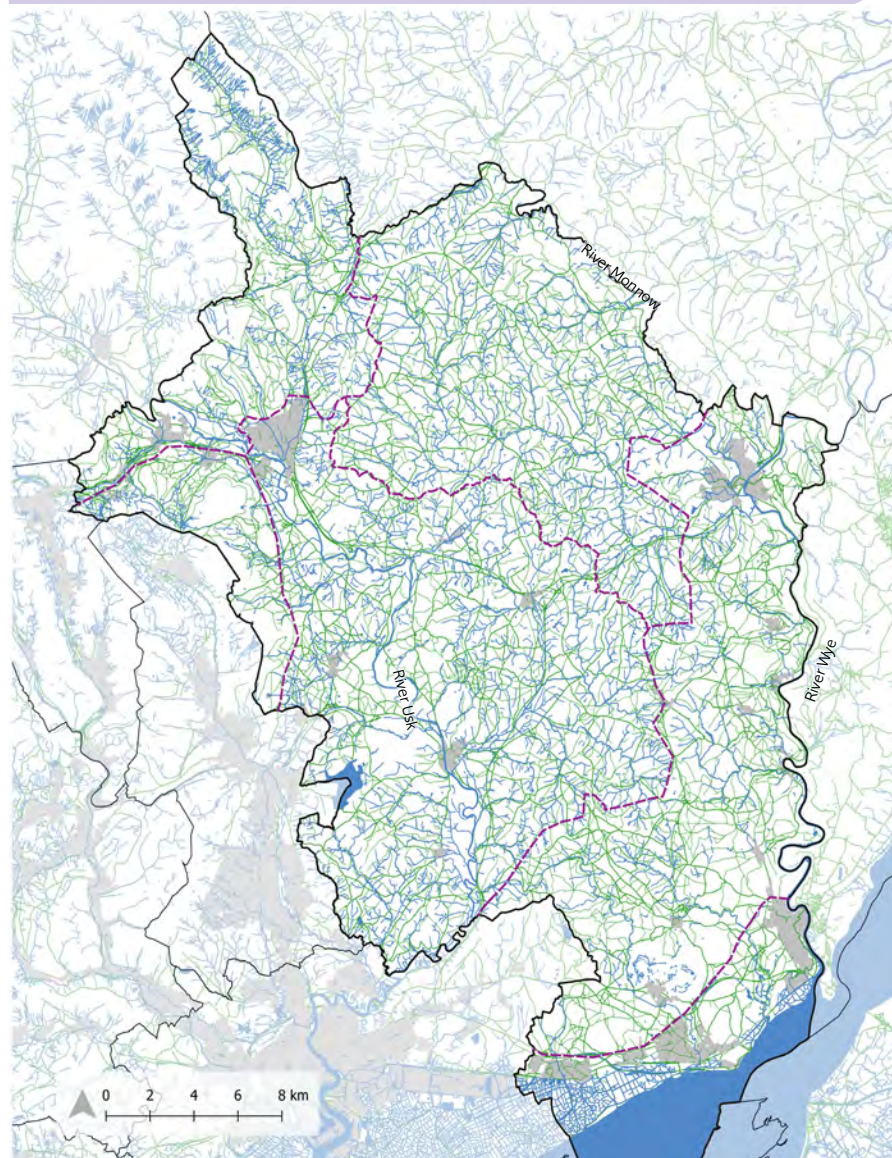


Green and blue corridors

Linear landscape features encompassing semi-natural and natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats (see **Diagram D1.4**). In addition to function in supporting wildlife dispersal, corridors also provide opportunities for walking, cycling and other outdoor recreation activities. Within Monmouthshire, significant green and blue corridors include:

- The larger Rivers **Usk**, **Wye**, and **Monnow** (important green/blue corridors incorporating public access in some places such as the Usk and Wye Valley Walks)
- Smaller watercourses including the River Trothy, Nedern Brook, Olway Brook and Mill Reen.
- The ditch and reen network on the Gwent Levels (important green/blue corridors incorporating public access in some places)
- The Severn Estuary (an important marine blue corridor for migration of fish and birds).
- The sea wall along the Severn Estuary (an important green corridor for plant communities and pollinators, incorporating the Wales Coast Path for much of its length)
- Historic green lanes and byways
- Highway and railway verges between settlements (important green corridors)

DIAGRAM D1.4 Green and Blue Corridors



Productive landscapes (farmland, woodlands and allotments)

Farmland, orchards and allotments can contribute to local food production and landscape character. Monmouthshire is well wooded, particularly through the Wye Valley in the east and across to Wentwood in the southwest. Scattered small woodlands are also a feature across the farmland that makes up much of the central part of the county.

Farmland (see **Diagram D1.5**) includes both commercial farming businesses and small holdings, consisting of a predominantly pastoral farming landscape with pockets of arable land. The highest quality, and thus most productive agricultural land is found in the south of the county, in the Gwent Levels and in pockets across Central Monmouthshire – South. The poorest quality farmland is found in the uplands, and is usually grazed by sheep where it is used for farming.

Zone	% of Zone Grade 1 or 2
A: Gwent Levels	17%
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	27%
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	41%
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	46%
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	8%
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	1%
Monmouthshire	31%

DIAGRAM D1.5 Productive Landscapes - Farmland

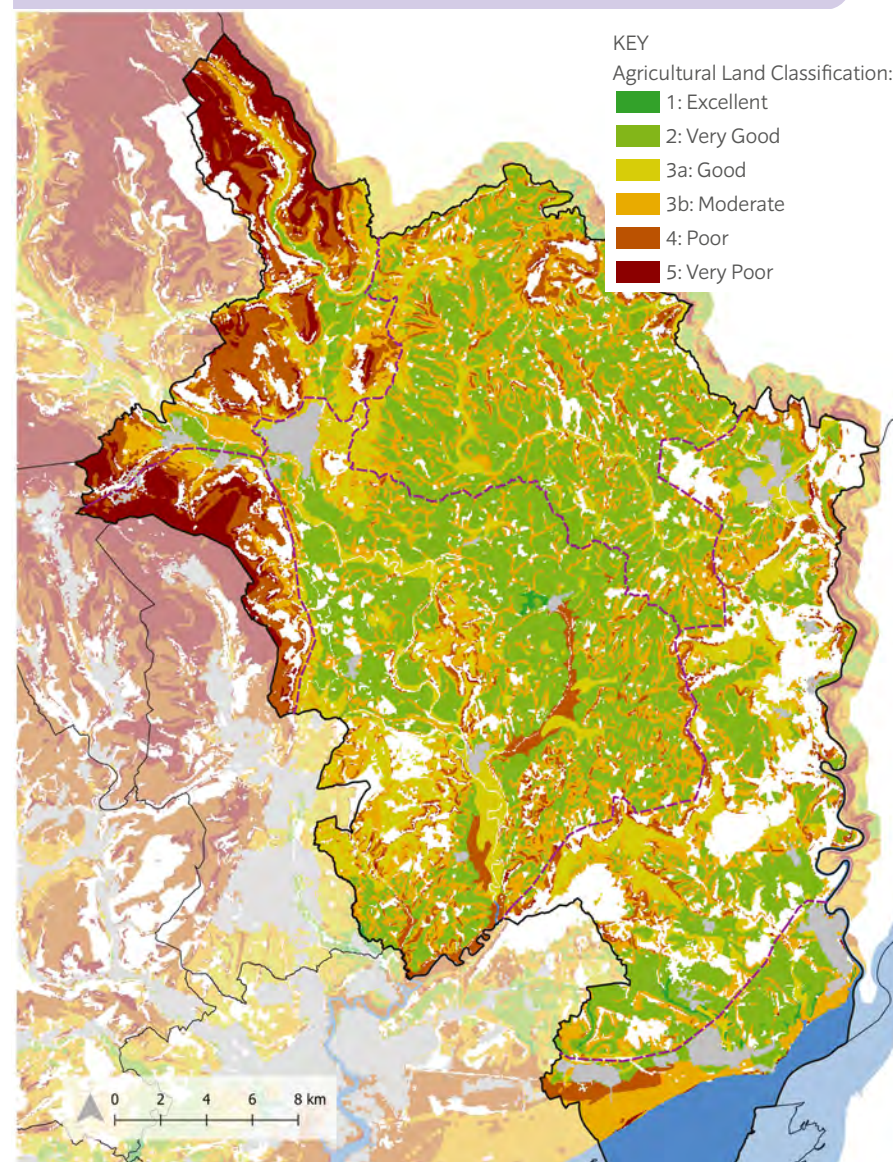
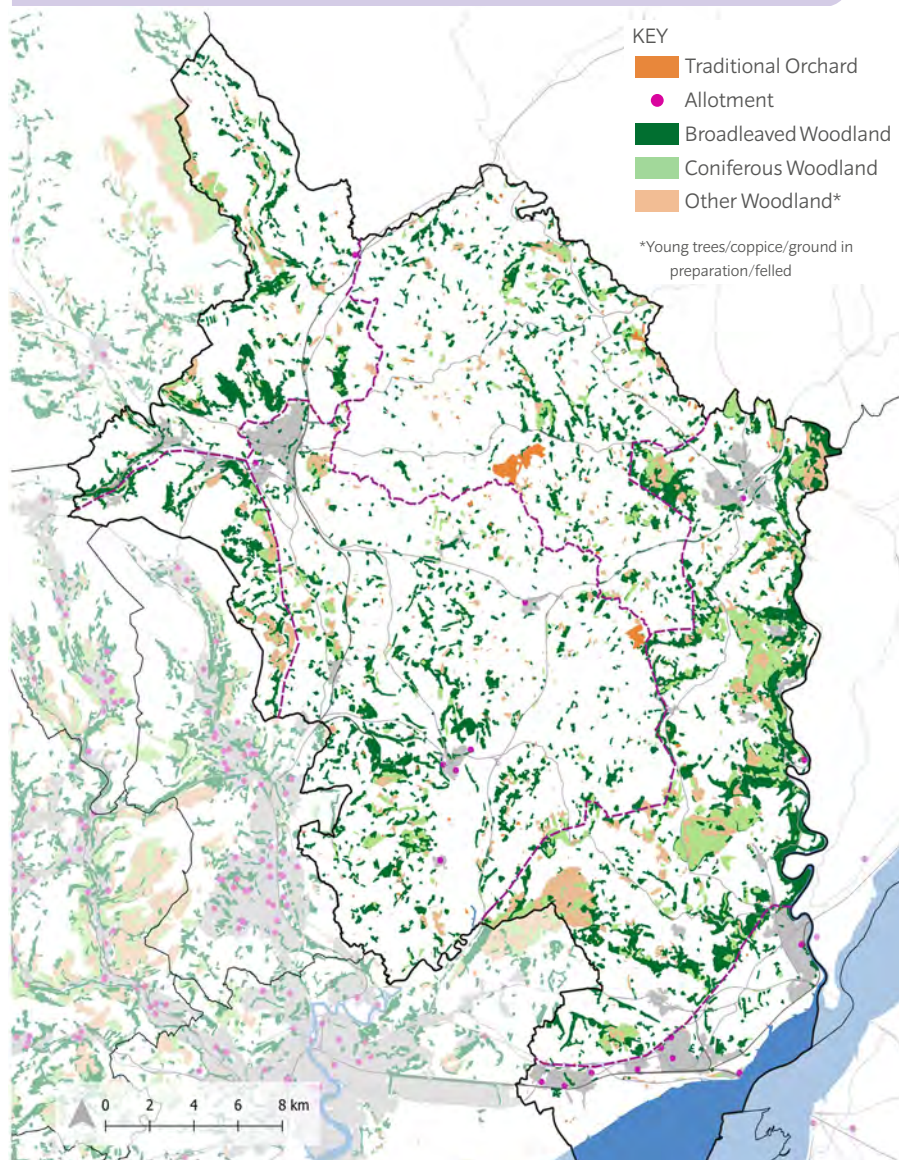


DIAGRAM D1.6 Productive Landscapes - Woodland & Allotments



Monmouthshire is a heavily wooded county (see **Diagram D1.6**), particularly through the Wye Valley and in the south of the Usk Catchment. Large areas of this woodland in the county are also accessible, such as in the Wye Valley and Wentwood, where 3,384 Ha of a total 6,540 Ha are accessible.

Historically, orchards were a distinctive feature of the landscape found alongside farms, and in the south, orchards on the Gwent Levels produced their own specific apple and pear varieties. However, the end of cider making locally resulted in the loss of orchards, and in the Monmouthshire area of the Levels they are now limited to a few sites in the vicinity of Magor on the Caldicot Level. Elsewhere in the county, there are small scattered areas of traditional orchard remaining, with larger areas to the southeast of Llantilio Crosenny and southeast of Raglan. There are some small areas of allotments around the larger settlements.

Zone	Woodland (% of Zone)	NRW Public Forest (Accessible)	Allotments
A: Gwent Levels	199 Ha (3%)	25 Ha	9
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	6,540 Ha (32%)	3,384 Ha	2
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	2,695 Ha (10%)	85 Ha	6
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	1,640 Ha (9%)	12 Ha	0
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	1,623 Ha (15%)	308 Ha	1
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	770 Ha (21%)	160 Ha	0
Monmouthshire	13,467 Ha (15%)	3,974 Ha	18

Cemeteries and churchyards

In addition to providing important habitats for wildlife, cemeteries and churchyards (see **Diagram D1.7**) can also provide opportunities for quiet reflection and spiritual enrichment that contribute to people’s well-being. Examples in Monmouthshire include urban cemeteries (such as Osbaston Cemetery in Monmouth), churchyards associated with small rural parish churches (such as St Teilo’s Church, Llanarth, and St. Nicholas Church, Trellech) and cemeteries and churchyards on the edge of urban areas, such as Dewstow Road Cemetery on the northern side of Caldicot.

Zone	Religious Grounds and Cemeteries*
A: Gwent Levels	14
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	28
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	53
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	25
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	10
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	4
Monmouthshire	134

*Nb - numbers taken from Ordnance Survey Greenspace data. Diagram D1.7 includes both Ordnance Survey Greenspace data, and data from the Monmouthshire Open Space Study, 2008

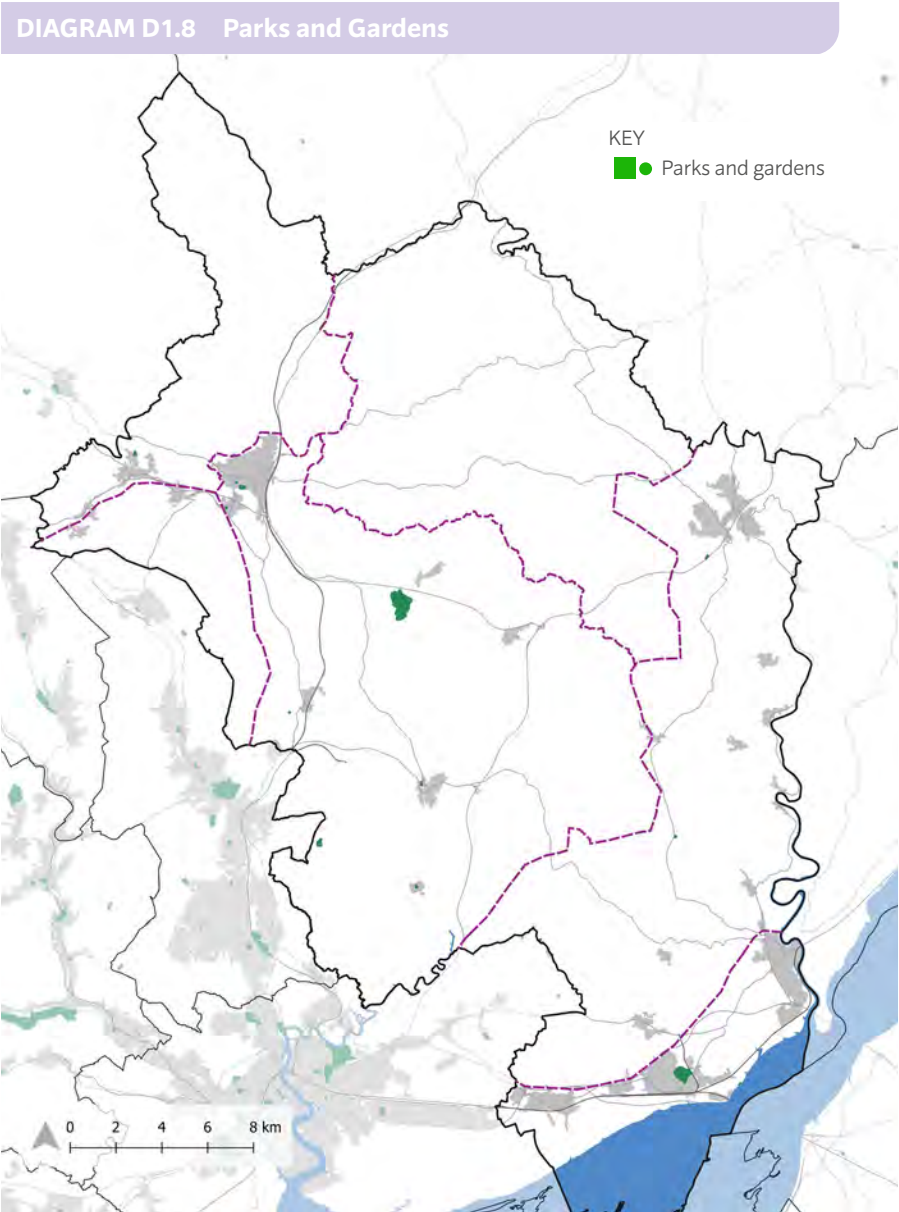


Parks and gardens

Public parks and gardens (see **Diagram D1.8**) provide opportunities for informal recreation that can contribute to people’s health and well-being, and also provide habitats for wildlife. There are few urban parks in the county, including Bailey Park in Abergavenny, and larger Country Parks include Caldicot Castle Country Park and Clytha Park near Abergavenny.

Zone	Parks and Gardens
A: Gwent Levels	2
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	4
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	7
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	0
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	1
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	0
Monmouthshire	14

*Nb - numbers taken from Ordnance Survey Greenspace data. Diagram D1.8 includes both Ordnance Survey Greenspace data, and data from the Monmouthshire Open Space Study, 2008



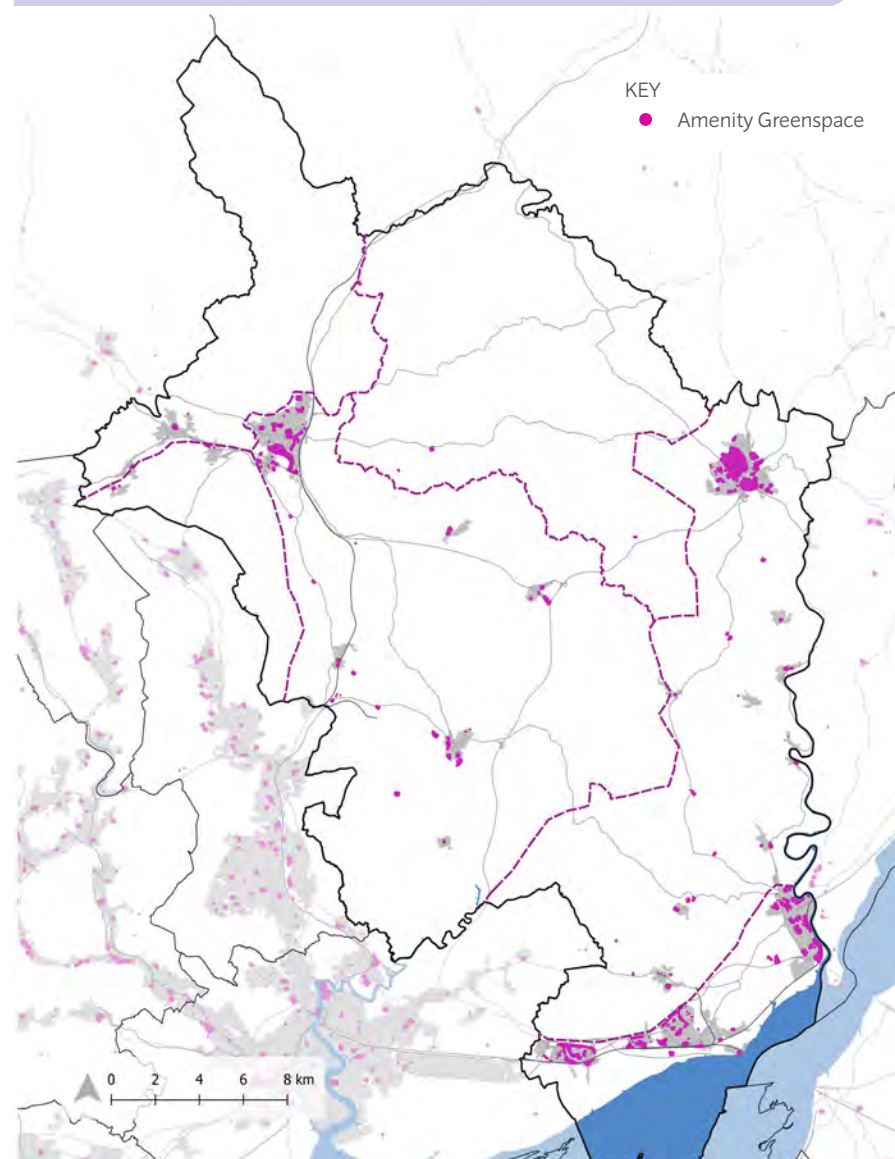
Amenity greenspaces

Amenity greenspaces (see **Diagram D1.9**) predominantly provide opportunities for formal outdoor sports and recreation that contribute to people's health and well-being. Examples within the study area include formal amenity greenspaces associated with sports facilities (such as The Island Recreation Ground in Usk), and a range of more informal amenity greenspaces and play spaces in urban areas such as Stuart Avenue Open Space in Chepstow, and Tudor Road Open Space in Monmouth.

Zone	Sports Playing Field*	Play Space*
A: Gwent Levels	19	49
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	15	35
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	19	35
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	2	3
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	3	4
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	2	4
Monmouthshire	59	130

*Nb - numbers taken from Ordnance Survey Greenspace data. Diagram D1.9 includes both Ordnance Survey Greenspace data, and data from the Monmouthshire Open Space Study, 2008

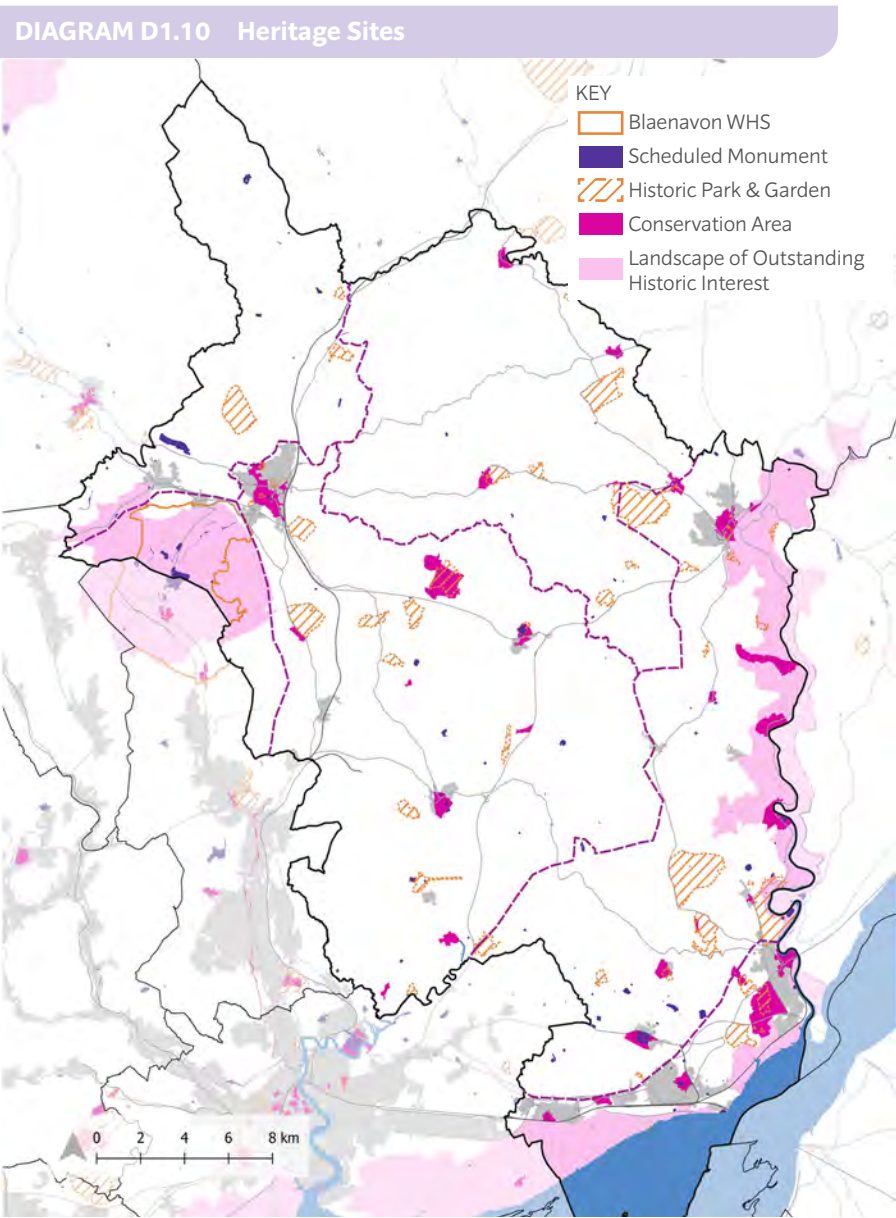
DIAGRAM D1.9 Amenity Greenspace



Heritage Sites

Heritage sites (see **Diagram D1.10**) can provide opportunities for informal recreation and intellectual access to history that contributes to people’s health and well-being. Examples in Monmouthshire include scheduled monuments such as Caldicot Castle and Tintern Abbey, as well as historic landscapes associated with the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site, the Gwent Levels, and the Wye Valley.

Zone	Scheduled Monuments	Historic Parks & Gardens	Conservation Areas	Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest
A: Gwent Levels	27	6	6	3599 Ha
B: Wye Valley & Wentwood	68	18	13	3694 Ha
C: Central Monmouthshire - South	44	17	10	29 Ha
D: Central Monmouthshire – North	24	8	5	0 Ha
E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains	23	3	-	311 Ha
F: Eastern South Wales Valleys	15	-	-	2419 Ha
Monmouthshire	201	52	34	10,053 Ha



d2

Ecosystem Services

General

The GI assets identified in **Appendix D1** provide a wide range of benefits to society derived from the functions or ecosystems services that they provide.

A summary of the ecosystem services provided by the GI assets in each zone (**Diagram D2.1**) within Monmouthshire is described below. These form the basis for identifying needs and opportunities for the GI Strategy.

DIAGRAM D2.1 GI Zones



The existing GI network represents GI assets defined by the following datasets: Greenspace Study (excluding non-natural greenspace), Open Space Study, county-wide public rights of way, county-wide designated sites of nature conservation value, county-wide designated features of historic value, county-wide watercourses and water bodies, predominantly undeveloped floodplains (flood risk areas), and county-wide woodlands. See Appendix B for details.

DIAGRAM D2.2 Geology

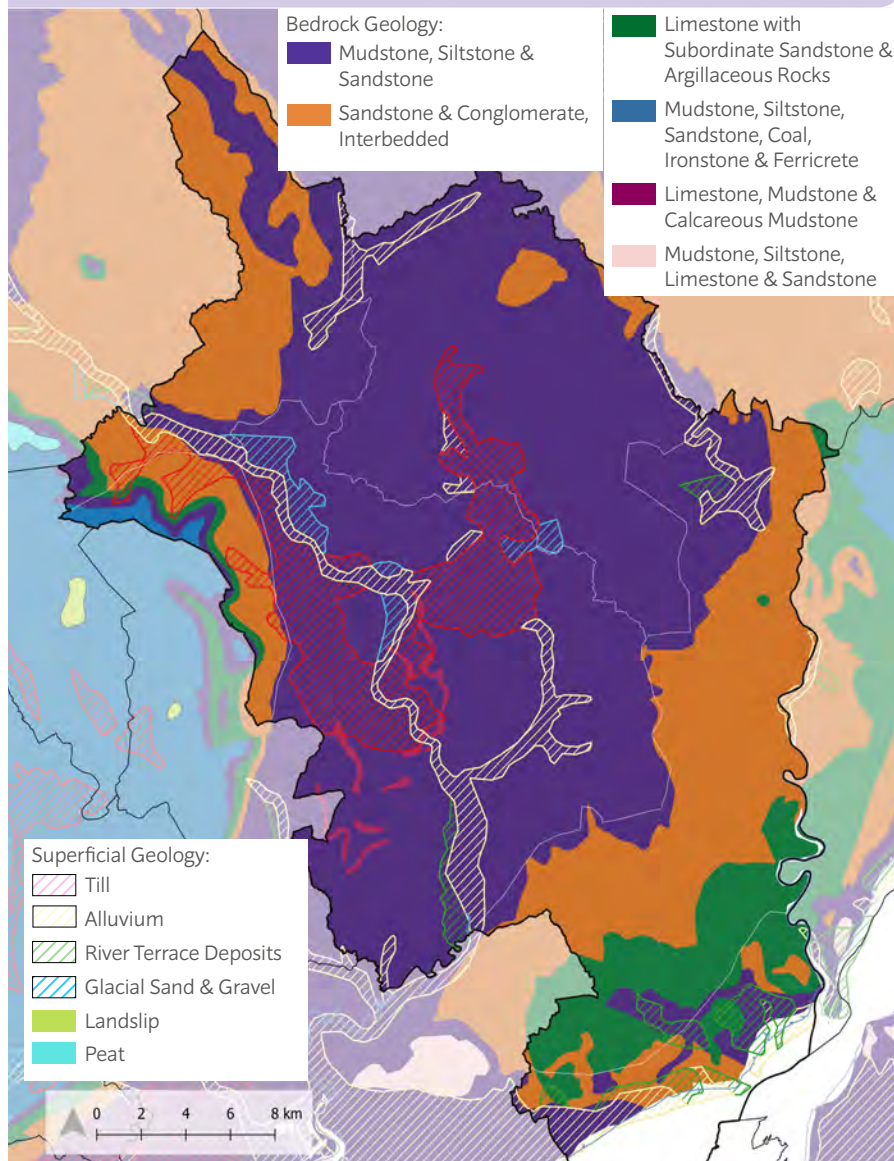
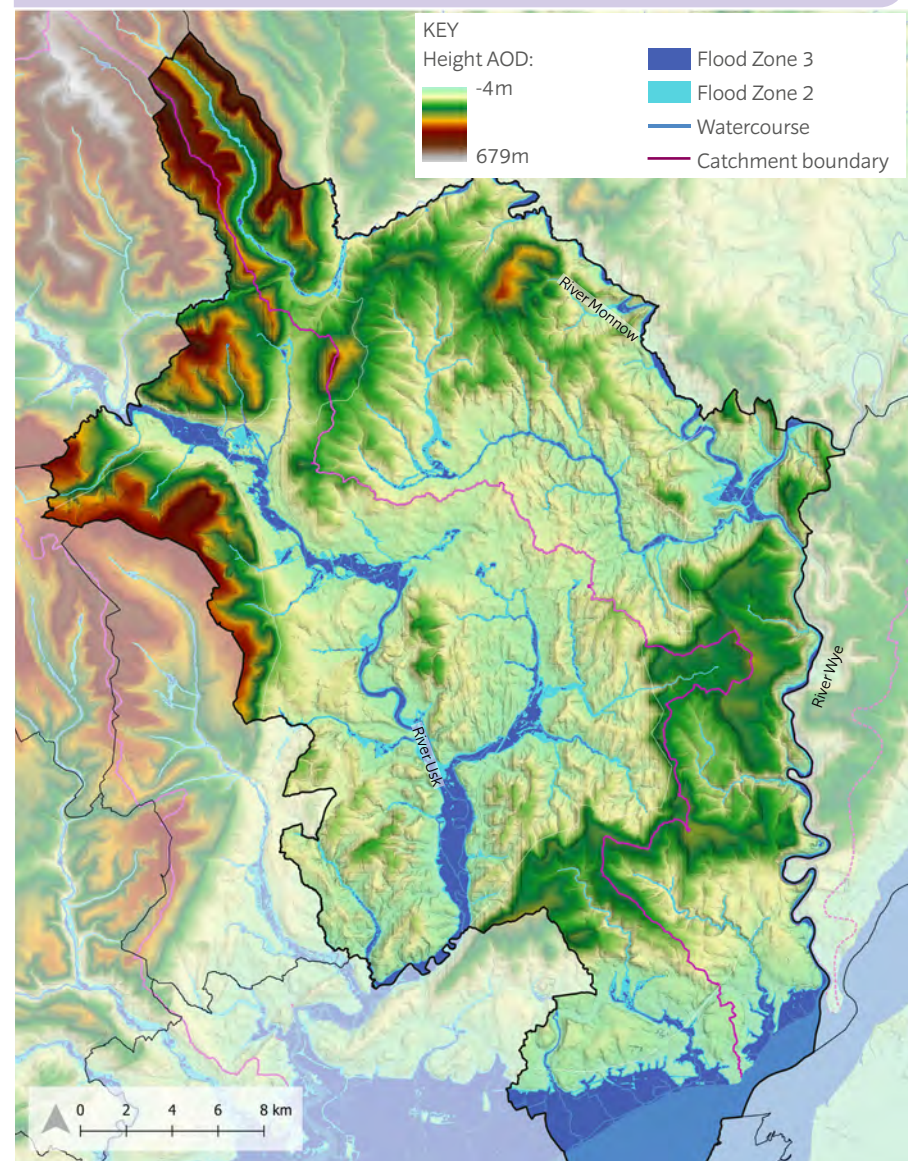


DIAGRAM D2.3 Topography & Hydrology



Zone A: Gwent Levels

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: The northern edge of the Gwent Levels is marked by the boundary between the slightly higher ground in the north, underlain by sedimentary rocks mainly of Lower Old Red sandstone age, and the lower, flatter land on reclaimed estuarine alluvium to the south (see **Diagram D2.2**). The estuarine alluvium is mainly a bluegrey, silty mud up to 13 metres thick that gives rise to heavy textured, poorly drained clayey soils. There are also some localised areas of peaty soils, such as south of Magor. These most commonly occur as a layer of peat covered by clayey topsoil, but where the soft black peat extends to the surface these areas are particularly wet.

Soil formation: In the context of the Gwent Levels, supporting services relate to the exchange of silts and nutrients between the reën system and the agricultural land. This interchange relies heavily on the regulation of water management and cyclical ditch management. The supply and replenishment of nutrients maintains soils, primary production (including agricultural productivity), as well as providing the basis for supporting the nature conservation value of the Gwent Levels.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy¹ and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines² to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales³ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production.

3 TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd.

1 Defra (November 2014). The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England.

2 <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The Gwent Levels is largely a rain-fed system, with relatively limited inputs from river discharge. Water availability therefore largely relies on the relationship between rainfall inputs and the active management of water levels through the control structures that moderate flows and discharges. The abundance of water is key to maintaining the character and function of the area. The main abstractions are for public water supply; other abstractions are for industry and agriculture.

Food provision: The area primarily produces beef, milk and other dairy products, with some sheep flocks and arable production. A small number of traditional orchards of apples and pears are present. The extent to which the Gwent Levels remains a productive landscape is variable and is influenced by farm size, landholdings purchased for non-farming reasons, diversification of business activities that may include wind and solar power generation, holiday lets or similar and the separation between pasture on the Levels and the holdings that operate them.

All of these factors influence productivity and, importantly, how separate land parcels are managed in a landscape that requires a coherent approach to, for example, land drainage.

Fuel and fibre: There is limited potential for some biomass production from willow pollards, which has a longstanding tradition throughout the area. However, the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested may restrict the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation. Other sources of renewable energy generation on the Gwent Levels include wind turbines and solar arrays. However, both these sources

of power give rise to other considerations that include land take, drainage management and visual impacts associated with the introduction of prominent structures into the landscape.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme (RECS)⁴ completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off, any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

⁴ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: There is limited carbon storage in the Gwent Levels predominantly due to the limited areas of peat soils. The majority of the Levels comprise loams derived from reclaimed estuarine alluvium.

Regulating water quality: The Gwent Levels, and the rivers that drain through it, fall within the Severn River Basin District. The 2022 River Basin Management Plan⁵ identifies a range of factors that are detrimental to water quality in the River Basin District, such as over-abstraction, chemical inputs, plastics, pollution from agriculture and rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport, physical modifications, and invasive non-native species (eg. Japanese knotweed can increase riverbank erosion and may reduce the capacity of river channels, possibly leading to increased flooding).

Point source pollution from development and industry is also an influence on water quality. The water quality within the ditch and reen system of the Gwent Levels is considered to reflect the low flow and significant organic loading associated with the setting. During the summer months, natural organic degradation results in significant nutrient enrichment. The high productivity and low/absent flow also result in low levels of dissolved oxygen and elevated Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) compared with other rivers. The regulation of water quality on the Levels is therefore largely determined by the control of urban and agricultural diffuse pollution and the management of the reen system.

Regulating water (flooding): The Gwent Levels are largely a rain fed system and although the rivers have been artificially modified to increase flows to the sea, they have only a limited influence on water levels (see **Diagram D2.3**). Nevertheless, Local Plan⁶ policies (e.g. Policy SD3) provide specific requirements

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales>

⁶ Monmouthshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan 2011-2021 (Adopted February 2014)

for surface water drainage relating to the management of surface water runoff from development, to manage flood risk from the landward side. The seawall, in combination with the maintenance of the ditch and reen network, is the primary means for regulating flows and preventing flooding to communities including Caldicot, Magor & Undy, Rogiet and Mathern, maintaining agricultural productivity and protecting the ecological interest of the Gwent Levels.

Regulating soil erosion and quality: Intensive and repeated cultivation and arable cropping increase the stress placed upon soils, and may lead to a reduction in soil quality and condition. Similarly, inappropriate livestock management can lead to poaching and erosion of surface vegetation and soils. Consequently, some areas suffer from damaged soil structure, notably compaction and impeded drainage which accelerates run-off or prolongs periods of standing water, which can impact vegetation and lead to soil exposures, which can increase sedimentation of watercourses.

Regulating coastal processes: The Gwent Levels within Monmouthshire comprise c.1.775km² of reclaimed estuarine alluvium, forming a coastal plain up to 3.7km wide, fringing the northern side of the Severn Estuary. The Levels have been totally hand-crafted by humans, created through the enclosing and draining of tidal saltmarshes, and are still dominated today by the need to manage water. Without the sea wall, the Gwent Levels would be frequently inundated by the sea. The alignment of the sea defences is dynamic and has historically moved since Roman times. Climate change is likely to increase tidal flood risk; this will be exacerbated in low-lying areas where increased sea levels inhibit pumped land drainage. Tidal inundation within coastal areas could result in saline intrusion (although this is currently not an issue) into freshwater bodies, most of which are recognised for their nature conservation interest in SSSI designations and depend on fresh water. Coastal processes throughout the estuary are dynamic and of considerable importance, both within the estuary and to the low-lying adjacent land. The current policy for flood defences along the coast bordering the Gwent Levels is to 'hold the line'⁷.

⁷ The Shoreline Management Plan: Part B (Main Report) – Policy Statements. Report prepared by Atkins on behalf of Severn Estuary Coastal Group (2017)

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: The Gwent Levels landscape is perceived by different people in different ways. Some can find it featureless and intimidating, whereas others find it exhilarating and inspiring, valuing its strong sense of tranquillity and history, distinctive lifestyles and opportunities for recreation. The key qualities identified by the Landscape Character Assessment that give the Gwent Levels its unique sense of place are:

- The low horizon, level topography and broad skies, often augmented by dramatic cloudscapes, sunsets and sunrises.
- Strong linearity and distinctive geometric pattern of enclosure, drainage, watercourses, lanes and historic route-ways.
- Distinctive drainage pattern of canalised rivers, drains, reens and ditches, accentuated by lines of pollard willows.
- The sea wall, and banks carrying roads/droeways between farmsteads and villages, often form the only upstanding landscape features in some places.
- The large assemblages of waterfowl and waders that visit the coastal mudflats and wetlands, and the vast flocks -murmurations - of starlings gathering on the Levels in autumn and winter forming mesmeric and dramatic aerial displays.
- A sparse settlement pattern related to subtle topographical variations, the simple and utilitarian style of buildings often reflecting the functional nature of the landscape.

- In summer, a verdant and fertile landscape with lush vegetation across meadows and along watercourses; this contrasts with the often wild, bleak and sense of remoteness experienced on the Levels in winter.
- Vibrant cities and towns around the edge of the Levels reinforce its strong sense of tranquillity, remoteness and wildness away from human occupation in many places.

Sense of history: The Gwent Levels is a Historic Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. It is a landscape of extraordinarily diverse environmental and archaeological potential. Although they are an important wetland resource in their own right, archaeologically the area contains a variety of landscapes of different dates, and nowhere else is it possible to make the period distinctions so easily. Having been reclaimed from the sea at various times during the historic period, the present land surface is a supreme example of a 'hand-crafted' landscape, artificially created and entirely the work of humans, preserving clear evidence of distinctive patterns of settlement, enclosure and drainage systems. However, because of recurrent phases of inundation and alluviation, there is also a proven, and quite possibly vast, potential for extensive, buried, waterlogged, archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits belonging to the earlier landscapes, which extend beyond the seawalls and banks into the intertidal mudflats. The Levels are therefore a uniquely rich archaeological and historical resource in Wales, and certainly of international importance and significance.

Leisure and Recreation: The Gwent Levels landscape provides a range of outdoor leisure and recreation activities for local communities and visitors, in particular walking, cycling and bird-watching. Facilities and destinations include promoted recreational routes such as the Wales Coast Path; country parks (for example Caldicot Castle); nature reserves including Magor Marsh and Great Traston Meadows as well as a number of villages including Magor/Undy. Angling, particularly off the seawall, is a common activity. Wildfowling is also active on the Levels.

Zone B: Wye Valley and Wentwood

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: The bedrock geology of the Wye Valley and Wentwood GI Zone is dominated by rocks ranging from Lower Devonian to Lower Carboniferous and record sedimentation in both terrestrial and marine environments (see **Diagram D2.2**). The Carboniferous sequence comprises a range of different lithologies including shale, sandstone, oolitic limestone and dolomite. Between Monmouth and Chepstow, the modern River Wye occupies a spectacular, deeply-incised meandering gorge. A remarkable feature of the reach is that although the gorge is entrenched to a depth of up to 200m, its meandering course displays no relationship to the geological structure, although it is likely that incision was enhanced by joint systems in the Palaeozoic bedrock⁸.

Soil formation: The agricultural land of the Wye Valley and Wentwood GI Zone overlies relatively well draining brown earth soils and, as a consequence, there is a noticeable scarcity of marshy grassland/rush pasture.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy⁹ and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines¹⁰ to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

⁸ NRW (2014) Wye Valley and Wentwood NLCA (NLCA 32)

⁹ Defra (November 2014). The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England.

¹⁰ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales¹¹ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production. With specific reference to the Wye Valley and Wentwood GI Zone, the Action Plan broadly identifies high grassland species diversity along the Wye Valley and urban areas, with lower diversity in the uplands and in the intensive agricultural areas.

¹¹ TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd.

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The Wye catchment area comprises the River Wye and a number of substantial tributaries, including the Monnow which runs along the northern boundary of the county. The River Wye is the sixth largest river in the UK, with a total catchment area of 4,171km² spanning both England and Wales; approximately 10% of the catchment falls within Monmouthshire. The river is tidal for approximately 23km (14 miles) from the tidal limit at Bigsweir Bridge to Chepstow where it flows into the Severn Estuary. The annual average rainfall across the area varies between 2,200mm in the mountainous headwaters (outside Monmouthshire), to 700mm in the lower catchment. The lower Wye catchment, including Monmouthshire, has slightly permeable geology with groundwater providing a contribution to river flow. The River Wye is known as a 'regulated river'. Water is released from the Elan Valley Reservoirs in Mid-Wales to support public water supply and other abstractions in the lower reaches of the Wye, when flows fall below a certain threshold.

Food provision: Away from the Wye gorge, the area is characterised by low-lying, gently rolling farmland with much of the land being dominated by agriculturally improved, livestock grassland together with a significant element of arable farming on more fertile soils.

Fuel & fibre: In some parts of the county there is limited potential for some biomass production from willow pollards, particularly along main river courses and within the floodplains. More generally, the wooded character of Monmouthshire in general, and the Wye Valley in particular, also provide opportunities for wood fuel production either through the use of its extensive plantation forestry or as a by-product of other forest industry. However, the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested may restrict the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would

need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation. Other sources of renewable energy generation in Monmouthshire generally include wind turbines and solar arrays. However, both these sources of power give rise to other considerations that include land take, drainage management and visual impacts associated with the introduction of prominent structures into the landscape.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme¹² (RECS) completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off, any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

¹² <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality, flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: Climate change is predicted to affect the amount and distribution of rainfall; this has an impact on flows and water levels, drought and flood events. Work carried out in 2002 showed that by 2050 river flows in winter may rise by 10-15% but in the summer and early autumn could reduce by over 50% and as much as 80% in some places. As a consequence, droughts and flood events may become more common. Climate change may affect groundwater recharge. By 2025 it is likely that groundwater recharge will decrease, resulting in decreased dry weather river flows and a general lowering of groundwater levels. This may have impacts on base-flow to rivers and wetlands in dry periods and affect small domestic and agricultural water supplies. Further evidence has identified risks to aquifers and habitats from salt water intrusion¹³.

Regulating water quality: The River is predominantly rural in nature; agriculture dominates with arable, dairy and sheep farms on generally sandy silty soils prone to erosion, particularly within its upper reaches.

The 2022 Severn River Basin Management Plan¹⁴ identifies a range of factors that are detrimental to water quality in the River Basin District, such as over-abstraction, chemical inputs, plastics, pollution from agriculture and rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport, physical modifications, and invasive non-native species (eg. Japanese knotweed can increase riverbank erosion and may reduce the capacity of river channels, possibly leading to increased flooding).

A variety of management initiatives have been identified to maintain and improve water quality, including:

- Changes to water levels and flows - Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency work together to manage water levels and flows, including working together to licence new and previously exempt surface water and groundwater abstractions, ensuring the demand for water is more sustainable for the future.

¹³ The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR): Assessment of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. Technical Report. Natural Resources Wales.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales>

- Invasive non-native species - The Wye and Usk Foundation and Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency are working in partnership to eradicate invasive non-native species on the River Wye. The work also needs to be extended to other cross border catchments, for example the River Monnow. They are also looking to develop joint protocols that reduce the risk of an accidental transfer of invasive non-native species during work on cross border rivers, for example whilst restocking eels.
- Physical modifications - Natural Resources Wales is developing an integrated River Restoration Programme to bring together related work across Wales. The aim is to take a nature-based approach to restore characteristic river habitat for the benefit of hydromorphology, water quality, biodiversity, fisheries and flood regulation.
- Pollution from agriculture and rural areas - Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency, with a range of stakeholders and partners, are addressing issues associated with how land and livestock are managed and exercising their pollution control powers to address diffuse pollution.
- Pollution from water industry waste water - Water quality modelling has been carried out for the next period of water company investment by Severn Trent Water and Welsh Water/Dŵr Cymru with input from the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales. Further work is being undertaken to finalise schemes in order to maximise benefits within catchments and further improve discharges from sewage treatment works and combined sewer overflows.

Regulating water (flooding): The Wye catchment has a wide variation of fluvial flooding issues ranging from extended periods of elevated levels within the River Wye Valley that affect many communities, flooding from tributaries of the River Wye, flooding from quickly responding catchments and tidal flooding from the Severn Estuary (see **Diagram D2.3**). In addition climate change is likely to increase the pressure on existing locations where surface water/sewer flooding occurs. The greatest threat to the lower catchment is from sea level rise which could increase flood risk significantly in low-lying areas.

Environmental Objectives for the management of flood risk include:

- Restoration of sustainable natural storage of floodwater in the upstream area, in order to offset increasing flood risk from trends including climate change;
- Improving the water environment through flood risk management activities;
- Improving the hydro-morphology of rivers;
- Minimising impacts of flooding on designated sites or areas of environmental interest; and,
- Habitat creation through flood risk management activities.

Regulating soil erosion and quality: The soils of best quality and most productive agricultural land are a scarce and finite resource in Wales; accounting for less than 7% of land area. Soil quality has deteriorated across all habitats apart from woodlands where there has been some improvement. The severity and spatial extent of soil erosion has not been directly quantified in Wales. Around 10-15% of grassland fields in (England and) Wales are thought to be affected by severe soil compaction and 50-60% are in moderate condition. No data exists on compaction in grassland and arable land across Wales specifically. Topsoil carbon concentrations are generally stable and there is ongoing recovery from soil acidification. Although a significant decline in soil phosphorus levels has been seen for Improved Land, it remains above the optimum levels in many (44%) agricultural fields. Soil invertebrate (mesofauna) numbers indicate no overall trend. There has been little or no decline in elevated levels of soil contaminants from industry and transport. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 Evidence Report¹⁵ has identified risks to soils from increased seasonal aridity and wetness. Climate change related risks are threatening the many services that soils provide, notably those that relate to soil biota, soil organic matter, and soil erosion and compaction.

Regulating coastal processes: The role the River Wye plays in regulating coastal process is addressed in relation to The Gwent Levels.

¹⁵ HM Government UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022>

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: In the Wye Valley special qualities identified include 'picturesque, extensive and dramatic views' and 'overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness/wildness'. This is an enclosed landscape, covered by the wooded high ground where, in its southern reaches, the River Wye is hidden by high cliffs. The only large settlement within this zone is the town of Monmouth, with its rich historical and cultural associations.

Sense of history: The Wye Valley is acknowledged to be one of the most scenically attractive lowland landscapes in Britain, and one of the few lowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also one of the few remaining areas with comparatively large tracts of ancient broadleaved woodlands, whilst the pastures, hay meadows, hedges and copses of the farmed landscape in and around the valley are also rich natural habitats with historical significance. In 1770, the scenic qualities of the valley inspired the Reverend William Gilpin to write his important treatise on the notion and depiction of landscape as the Picturesque. Along with its artistic associations, the valley also has a rich archaeological legacy, from the prehistoric to the recent past, reflecting its importance as a communication route, a natural and political boundary, and a centre of religious life and of several early industries.

Leisure and recreation: The Wye valley is a scenic leisure destination, from Tintern Abbey and the village of Tintern Parva, to Monmouth, including its unique Monnow Bridge. Tintern and Monmouth offer good access to the river. More generally, however, the geology of the Wye Valley and the River Wye itself provide opportunities for leisure activities that include: canoeing, climbing, caving, as well as walking, cycling and horse riding through the area's extensive woodlands, whilst the Wye Valley River Festival provides a focus for the arts and culture. The annual Monmouth Festival provides a focus for the arts and culture.

Zone C: Central Monmouthshire - South

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: The central area between the River Usk and Monmouth is Silurian mudstones and shales surrounded by a large band of earlier, Devonian Old Red Sandstone (see **Diagram D2.2**). Morainic drift and boulder clay give rise to the fertile alluvial deposits that are key to the agricultural productivity in this rural area.

Soil formation: Geology has produced mainly well-drained, coarse loamy and sandy soils surrounded by finer silty soils over the shales, silts and sandstones¹⁶.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales¹⁷ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of

Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production. With specific reference to the Usk catchment, the Action Plan broadly identifies high grassland species diversity along parts of the Usk floodplain and urban areas, with lower diversity in the uplands and in the intensive agricultural areas. There are also currently bee walk transects in Usk.

¹⁶ NRW (2015) Central Monmouthshire NLCA (NLCA 31)

¹⁷ TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd.

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The Usk area extends outside the county from the Bannau Brycheiniog in the north to the low-lying agricultural land in the south. It includes the River Usk and its tributaries. The River Usk is approximately 121km long and the total catchment size 1,169km², with approximately 30% of the catchment falling within Monmouthshire. The climate is mild and wet, receiving an annual average rainfall of 1,700mm in the uplands and 1,100mm in the lowlands (compared with 1,310mm for Wales as a whole). The headwaters and some of its tributaries are modified by dams to create the Usk, Crai, Talybont and Grwyne Fawr reservoirs. At Brecon some of the river's flow is diverted to feed the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and water from the lower River Usk is pumped to Llandegvedd water storage reservoir ¹⁸.

Food provision: Much of the central and southern parts of Monmouthshire are utilised for sheep grazing and dairy farming, with some smaller areas of arable farming on the fertile floodplain where good drainage allows. A small number of traditional orchards are present. In the northwest of the county, higher land, much of which are commons, tends to be sheep grazed, with small scale enclosed sheep and dairy pasture on the lower slopes and valleys. Some localised areas of farmland have been turned over to other uses, including diversification of business activities such as solar or wind power generation. These diversifying factors can influence productivity and, importantly, how separate land parcels are managed in a landscape that requires a coherent approach to, for example, land drainage. Abergavenny maintains a livestock market.

Fuel & fibre: In some parts of the county there is limited potential for some biomass production from willow pollards, particularly along main river courses and within the floodplains. The wooded character of Monmouthshire in general may also provide opportunities for wood fuel production as a by-product of

¹⁸ Environment Agency (December 2015). Part 1: Severn River Basin District River Basin Management Plan. On behalf of Defra, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and Environment Agency.

other forest industry. However, the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested may restrict the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation. Other sources of renewable energy generation in Monmouthshire include wind turbines and solar arrays (e.g. the solar farm development at Llancayo in the Usk Valley). However, both these sources of power give rise to other considerations that include land take, drainage management and visual impacts associated with the introduction of prominent structures into the landscape.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme¹⁹ (RECS) completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off, any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

¹⁹ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality, flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: Climate change is predicted to affect the amount and distribution of rainfall; this has an impact on flows and water levels, drought and flood events. Work carried out in 2002 showed that by 2050 river flows in winter may rise by 10-15% but in the summer and early autumn could reduce by over 50% and as much as 80% in some places. As a consequence, droughts and flood events may become more common. Climate change may affect groundwater recharge. By 2025 it is likely that groundwater recharge will decrease, resulting in decreased dry weather river flows and a general lowering of groundwater levels. This may have impacts on base-flow to rivers and wetlands in dry periods and affect small domestic and agricultural water supplies. Further evidence has identified risks to aquifers and habitats from salt water intrusion.

Regulating water quality: Land is predominantly used for agriculture, with sheep farming in the northern and western uplands, and beef, dairy, mixed and arable farming in the lowlands of the south and east. As a result, pollution from rural sources is considered a major threat to the ecological quality of the water environment. There is some limited industry in the major towns. Pollution from sewage and contaminated run-off is a pressure in the urban areas. The 2022 Severn River Basin Management Plan²⁰ identifies a range of factors that are detrimental to water quality in the River Basin District, such as over-abstraction, chemical inputs, plastics, pollution from agriculture and rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport, physical modifications, and invasive non-native species (eg. Japanese knotweed can increase riverbank erosion and may reduce the capacity of river channels, possibly leading to increased flooding).

Local measures²¹ include implementing changes to land drainage regimes and structures to restore water levels, removing or modify barriers to fish passage, reducing impacts of regulated flows and abstractions and restoring more natural

flow regimes, eradication and/or management of invasive non-native species including biosecurity good practice, such as "CHECKCLEAN-DRY" and Be Plant Wise; and implementing measures such as correct management of slurry, silage, fuel oil, and agricultural chemicals; clean and dirty water separation; nutrient management planning; buffer strips and riparian fencing; cover crops and soil management.

Regulating water (flooding): The upper part of the Usk catchment, into the Bannau Brycheiniog, demonstrates a flow regime with rapid rainfall runoff, caused by the steep sided narrow valleys and thin soils underlain by mainly impermeable rock; resulting in the lower reach floodplains becoming inundated during periods of heavy rainfall (see **Diagram D2.3**). The lower Usk tends to be less responsive to rainfall due to the larger catchment area and lowland relief. Objectives to reduce flooding set out in Monmouthshire's Flood Risk Management Plan which relate to the Usk catchment, include:

- Sustainable and Strategic Development Planning requiring proposals to demonstrate that they can be both protected from, and not exacerbate, flood events;
- Improved soils, reduction in soil wash off land and increased soil permeability.
- Water Cycle Strategy to facilitate sustainable development;
- The expectation that future development will incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) into their design to reduce surface water run-off and minimise its contribution to flood risk elsewhere;
- Encouraging sustainable land management practice to reduce surface water runoff and contamination, as well as the adoption of soil management plans to reduce runoff and improve soil permeability;
- Site restoration that focuses on soft, rather than hard, engineering solutions to create semi-natural environments;
- Environmental enhancements and habitat creation initiatives.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales>

²¹ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/3214/usk-management-catchment.pdf>

Regulating soil erosion and quality: The soils of best quality and most productive agricultural land are a scarce and finite resource in Wales; accounting for less than 7% of land area. Soil quality has deteriorated across all habitats apart from woodlands where there has been some improvement. The severity and spatial extent of soil erosion has not been directly quantified in Wales. Around 10-15% of grassland fields in (England and) Wales are thought to be affected by severe soil compaction and 50-60% are in moderate condition. No data exists on compaction in grassland and arable land across Wales specifically. Topsoil carbon concentrations are generally stable and there is ongoing recovery from soil acidification. Although a significant decline in soil phosphorus levels has been seen for Improved Land, it remains above the optimum levels in many (44%) agricultural fields. Soil invertebrate (mesofauna) numbers indicate no overall trend. There has been little or no decline in elevated levels of soil contaminants from industry and transport. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 Evidence Report²² has identified risks to soils from increased seasonal aridity and wetness. Climate change related risks are threatening the many services that soils provide, notably those that relate to soil biota, soil organic matter, and soil erosion and compaction.

²² HM Government UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022>

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: The Usk catchment, as it winds its way between the foothills of the Bannau Brycheiniog and Newport and the Severn estuary, passes through wooded rolling countryside comprising predominantly pastoral farmland and small village settlements. Overall, this part of Monmouthshire is fairly tranquil, with large areas categorised in the 2009 tranquil areas assessment as 'undisturbed' (countryside usually free of any substantial disturbance in daytime). The only large settlements within this zone are the towns of Abergavenny and Usk, with their rich historical and cultural associations.

Sense of history: This large area has a varied distribution of archaeological sites and monuments dating back to the prehistoric period. Strategically located Iron Age hillforts on summit tops overlook the Usk valley and accentuate the topography. The richness of the agricultural land led to successive 'colonisations' by a sequence of Roman, Early Christian, Norman and Marcher Lordship societies. The area is rich in mediaeval castles and fortified manors and Medieval churches with distinctive stone crosses²³.

Leisure and recreation: The Usk catchment within Monmouthshire offers opportunities for walking and cycling. The River Usk and its tributaries are noted for their fishing. This area of the County also offers many historical sites and towns to visit. Llandegfedd reservoir offers a variety of water sports and outdoor activities including canoeing, sailing and windsurfing, as well as opportunities for fishing, walking and bird watching. The Raglan music festival is staged annually.

²³ NRW (2015) Central Monmouthshire NLCA (NLCA 31)

Zone D: Central Monmouthshire - North

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: Fault-aligned vales and glacial deposits give rise to the fertile alluvial deposits that are key to the prosperity of this rural, farmed area. The underlying geology of this area largely comprises Silurian argillaceous mudstones and shales surrounded by Old Red Sandstone from the earlier, Lower Devonian period (see **Diagram D2.2**). These rocks were later folded during the Carboniferous period, and subsequently much faulted as, for example, along the northern margin of the area, where the course of the Monnow valley between Alltynyns and Monmouth Cap is strongly controlled by the east north east-striking Neath Disturbance, a large fault zone which probably lies above a major fracture in basement rocks deep below²⁴.

Soil formation: Geology has produced mainly well-drained, coarse loamy and sandy soils surrounded by finer silty soils over the shales, silts and sandstones.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy²⁵ and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines²⁶ to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

²⁴ NRW (2015) Central Monmouthshire NLCA (NLCA 31)

²⁵ Defra (November 2014). The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England.

²⁶ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales²⁷ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production.

²⁷ TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The Wye catchment area comprises the River Wye and a number of substantial tributaries, including the Monnow which runs along the northern boundary of the county. The River Wye is the sixth largest river in the UK, with a total catchment area of 4,171 km² spanning both England and Wales; approximately 10% of the catchment falls within Monmouthshire. The river is tidal for approximately 23 km (14 miles) from the tidal limit at Bigsweir Bridge to Chepstow where it flows into the Severn Estuary. The annual average rainfall across the area varies between 2,200 mm in the mountainous headwaters (outside Monmouthshire), to 700 mm in the lower catchment. The lower Wye catchment, including Monmouthshire, has slightly permeable geology with groundwater providing a contribution to river flow. The River Wye is known as a 'regulated river'. Water is released from the Elan Valley Reservoirs in Mid-Wales to support public water supply and other abstractions in the lower reaches of the Wye, when flows fall below a certain threshold.

Food provision: Much of the central and southern parts of Monmouthshire are utilised for sheep grazing and dairy farming, with some smaller areas of arable farming on the fertile floodplain where good drainage allows. A small number of traditional orchards are present. In the northwest of the county, higher land, much of which are commons, tends to be sheep grazed, with small scale enclosed sheep and dairy pasture on the lower slopes and valleys. Some localised areas of farmland have been turned over to other uses, including diversification of business activities such as solar or wind power generation. These diversifying factors can influence productivity and, importantly, how separate land parcels are managed in a landscape that requires a coherent approach to, for example, land drainage.

Fuel & fibre: In some parts of the county there is limited potential for some biomass production from willow pollards, particularly along main river courses and within the floodplains. The wooded character of Monmouthshire generally

may also provide opportunities for wood fuel production as a by-product of other forest industry. However, the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested may restrict the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation. Other sources of renewable energy generation in Monmouthshire include wind turbines and solar arrays. However, both these sources of power give rise to other considerations that include land take, drainage management and visual impacts associated with the introduction of prominent structures into the landscape.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme ²⁸ (RECS) completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off, any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

²⁸ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality, flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: Climate change is predicted to affect the amount and distribution of rainfall; this has an impact on flows and water levels, drought and flood events. Work carried out in 2002 showed that by 2050 river flows in winter may rise by 10-15% but in the summer and early autumn could reduce by over 50% and as much as 80% in some places. As a consequence, droughts and flood events may become more common. Climate change may affect groundwater recharge. By 2025 it is likely that groundwater recharge will decrease, resulting in decreased dry weather river flows and a general lowering of groundwater levels. This may have impacts on base-flow to rivers and wetlands in dry periods and affect small domestic and agricultural water supplies. Further evidence has identified risks to aquifers and habitats from salt water intrusion ²⁹.

Regulating water quality: The 2022 Severn River Basin Management Plan³⁰ identifies a range of factors that are detrimental to water quality in the River Basin District, such as over-abstraction, chemical inputs, plastics, pollution from agriculture and rural areas, pollution from towns, cities and transport, physical modifications, and invasive non-native species (eg. Japanese knotweed can increase riverbank erosion and may reduce the capacity of river channels, possibly leading to increased flooding). Challenges are likely to result from the largely rural nature of the watershed where agriculture dominates with arable, dairy and sheep farms on generally sandy silty soils prone to erosion, particularly within its upper reaches.

A variety of management initiatives have been identified to maintain and improve water quality, including:

- The use of buffer strips to control and regulate the deposition of silt into

²⁹ The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR): Assessment of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. Technical Report. Natural Resources Wales.

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales/severn-river-basin-management-plan-summary-and-cross-border-catchments-england-and-wales>

watercourses and control erosion;

- Improvements to water treatment and restrictions on groundwater abstraction;
- Increases in winter storage reservoirs;
- Use of SuDS and river buffer zones to reduce flooding, soil and nutrient loss;
- Provision of habitat such as buffer strips, fish passes, improvements to riverbank condition;
- Improvements in water quality to support recreation and tourism;
- Reduction in the use of fertilizers to no more than is needed, to protect groundwater aquifers.

Regulating water (flooding): The Wye catchment has a wide variation of fluvial flooding issues ranging from extended periods of elevated levels within the River Wye Valley that affect many communities, flooding from tributaries of the River Wye, flooding from quickly responding catchments and tidal flooding from the Severn Estuary (see **Diagram D2.3**). In addition climate change is likely to increase the pressure on existing locations where surface water/sewer flooding occurs. The greatest threat to the lower catchment is from sea level rise which could increase flood risk significantly in Chepstow and surrounding low-lying areas. Environmental Objectives for the management of flood risk include:

- Restoration of sustainable natural storage of floodwater in the upstream area, in order to offset increasing flood risk from trends including climate change;
- Improving the water environment through flood risk management activities;
- Improving the hydro-morphology of rivers;
- Minimising impacts of flooding on designated sites or areas of environmental interest; and,
- Habitat creation through flood risk management activities.

Regulating soil erosion and quality: The soils of best quality and most productive agricultural land are a scarce and finite resource in Wales; accounting for less than 7% of land area. Soil quality has deteriorated across all habitats apart from woodlands where there has been some improvement. The severity and spatial extent of soil erosion has not been directly quantified in Wales. Around 10-15% of grassland fields in (England and) Wales are thought to be affected by severe soil compaction and 50-60% are in moderate condition. No data exists on compaction in grassland and arable land across Wales specifically. Topsoil carbon concentrations are generally stable and there is ongoing recovery from soil acidification. Although a significant decline in soil phosphorus levels has been seen for Improved Land, it remains above the optimum levels in many (44%) agricultural fields. Soil invertebrate (mesofauna) numbers indicate no overall trend. There has been little or no decline in elevated levels of soil contaminants from industry and transport. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 Evidence Report³¹ has identified risks to soils from increased seasonal aridity and wetness. Climate change related risks are threatening the many services that soils provide, notably those that relate to soil biota, soil organic matter, and soil erosion and compaction¹⁰.

Regulating coastal processes: The role the River Wye plays in regulating coastal process is addressed in relation to The Gwent Levels.

³¹ HM Government UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022>

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: The Wye catchment, as it winds its way between the foothills of the Bannau Brycheiniog and the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB, passes through wooded rolling countryside comprising predominantly pastoral farmland and small village settlements. Overall, this part of Monmouthshire is fairly tranquil, with large areas categorised in the 2009 tranquil areas assessment as 'undisturbed' (countryside usually free of any substantial disturbance in daytime).

Sense of history: This large area has a varied distribution of archaeological sites and monuments dating back to the prehistoric period. Strategically located Iron Age hillforts on summit tops overlook the Wye valley and accentuate the topography. The richness of the agricultural land led to successive 'colonisations' by a sequence of Roman, Early Christian, Norman and Marcher Lordship societies. The area is rich in mediaeval castles and fortified manors and Medieval churches with distinctive stone crosses.³²

Leisure and recreation: The Wye catchment within Monmouthshire offers opportunities for walking and cycling. The River Wye and its tributaries are noted for their fishing. This area of the County also offers many historical sites to visit.

³² NRW (2015) Central Monmouthshire NLCA (NLCA 31)

Zone E: Bannau Brycheiniog and Black Mountains

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: The parts of the Bannau Brycheiniog that fall within the county are predominantly Devonian Old Red Sandstone (see **Diagram D2.2**). Generally, Monmouthshire's localised areas of poor to very poor quality soils occur mostly within the Bannau Brycheiniog over the higher ground.

Soil formation: Agriculture relies on soil formation, nutrients, water flow and pollination. The uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood. As long as they are free from the effects of heavy grazing, upland peat bogs store carbon and combat atmospheric pollution. They capture atmospheric carbon which helps mitigate the effects of climate change³³.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy³⁴ and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines³⁵ to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

³³ The Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028

³⁴ Defra (November 2014). The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England.

³⁵ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales³⁶ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production.

³⁶ TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd.

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release by virtue of their peat-forming and water storing wetlands, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood. There are a number of drinking water sources in the National Park including reservoirs, rivers, springs and boreholes. Some of Cardiff's drinking water is sourced directly from the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park area.

Food provision: Much of the central and southern parts of Monmouthshire are utilised for sheep grazing and dairy farming, with some smaller areas of arable farming on the fertile floodplain where good drainage allows. A small number of traditional orchards are present. In the northwest of the county, higher land, much of which are commons, tends to be sheep grazed, with small scale enclosed sheep and dairy pasture on the lower slopes and valleys. Some localised areas of farmland have been turned over to other uses, including diversification of business activities such as solar or wind power generation (eg. the solar farm development at Llancayo in the Usk Valley). These diversifying factors can influence productivity and, importantly, how separate land parcels are managed in a landscape that requires a coherent approach to, for example, land drainage.

Fuel & fibre: The Bannau Brycheiniog and Black Mountains offer a variety of landscapes capable of providing sources of clean, sustainable energy. The National Park Authority provides guidance on the provision of: standalone wind turbine power generation; heat pumps; woodfuel and biomass heating systems and micro and small-scale hydro power systems. With respect to the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested, however, there may be restrictions on the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme³⁷ (RECS) completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off; any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

³⁷ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality, flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: Eroding peat bog is a particular feature of the National Park with the largest concentration of this degraded habitat in Wales. Reversing this is an important contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change through land management. The range of likely climatic responses from west to east requiring differing responses in one unified area highlights the strategic role that the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park can play, as a barometer of change. The range of likely changes includes:

- Average summer temperatures in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - in the west of the Park increases are very likely to be between 1-2oC and 5-6oC warmer; in the east of the Park increases are very likely to be between 2-3oC and 6-7oC warmer.
- Average summer precipitation in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - summer precipitation is very likely to decline by 40-50% and very unlikely to increase by 0-10%, i.e., the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park may experience between 10% more and 50% less rainfall in the summer months.
- Average winter precipitation in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - increases in winter precipitation are very likely to be up to 60-70% in the west and 40-60% in the east.

Without intervention through catchment management, these precipitation changes represent a significant risk to water supplies to south Wales; less rainfall in the summer and more in the winter amounts to a net loss overall because the excess water falling during the winter months will exceed storage capacity and will therefore run off the land into the rivers, exacerbating flood risks.

Regulating water quality: Within the National Park there are large areas of severely degraded blanket bog and wet heath, the degree of erosion and oxidation of which is adversely affecting water quality and natural water storage, in a part of Wales where water quality and supply are critical to a large section of the population³⁸. Additionally, The declining numbers of livestock on the upland commons within the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park increase the risk of uncontrolled fires on large areas of dry Molinia-dominated moorland, which would further undermine the water quality and water conservation of this strategically important area. Conversely, there are also signs that the peat-forming and water-holding Sphagnum mosses are recovering in places where grazing pressure and trampling is reduced, which is also due to improvements in air quality.

The water quality within the River Usk SAC and its floodplain is heavily influenced by the surrounding land use and by the poor ecological condition of its upland catchments, which feed the main river and its SAC tributaries. For example, it has been demonstrated that the levels of sedimentation within the River Usk are directly affected by the extent of eroding river banks for 500m upstream and the lack of floodplain woodland. It has also been demonstrated that as the extent of woodland and rough grazing declined, the ecological richness of the river declined too.

Regulating water (flooding): The upper part of the Usk catchment into the Bannau Brycheiniog demonstrates a flow regime with rapid rainfall runoff, caused by the steep sided narrow valleys and thin soils underlain by mainly impermeable rock; resulting in the lower reach flood plains becoming inundated during periods of heavy rainfall (see **Diagram D2.3**). The lower Usk tends to be less responsive to rainfall due to the larger catchment area and lowland relief.

Regulating soil erosion and quality: The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park includes areas of deep peat and degraded bog which without buffering, is likely to lead to the degradation and loss of peat and soils with attendant impacts on water quality and downstream flooding risk.

³⁸ BBNP (July 2009). Brecon Beacons National Park: a good place for Glastir Sustainable Land Management Scheme

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: Monmouthshire presents a unique blend of Welsh and English cultures typical of this historically contested borderland at the entrance to Wales. In the Bannau Brycheiniog, a special quality identified is “the Park’s sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty observed across a variety of harmoniously connected landscapes, including marvellous gorges and waterfalls, classic karst geology with caves and sink holes, contrasting glacial landforms such as cliffs and broad valleys carved from old red sandstone and prominent hilltops with extensive views in all directions.”

The key qualities identified by the The Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028 are:

- Sweeping grandeur & outstanding natural beauty - The National Park’s sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty observed across a variety of harmoniously connected landscapes, including marvelous gorges and waterfalls, classic karst geology with limestone pavement, caves and sink holes, contrasting glacial landforms such as cliffs and broad valleys carved from old red sandstone and prominent hilltops with extensive views in all directions. A landscape that provides a sense of time depth and timelessness.
- Contrasting patterns, colours & textures - A working, living “patchwork” of contrasting patterns, colours and textures comprising well-maintained farmed landscapes, open uplands, lakes and meandering rivers, punctuated by small-scale woodlands, country lanes, hedgerows and stone walls and scattered settlements. grouped around landscape, community, experiences and wildlife.
- A sense of place & cultural identity - “Welshness” - characterised by the indigenous Welsh language, religious and spiritual connections, unique customs and events, traditional foods and crafts, relatively unspoilt historic towns and villages, family farms and continued practices of traditional skills developed by local inhabitants to live and earn a living here, such as common land practices and grazing.
- An intimate sense of community - An intimate sense of community where small, pastoral towns and villages are comparatively safe, friendly, welcoming and retain a spirit of cooperation.
- Enjoyable & accessible - Enjoyable and accessible countryside with extensive, widespread and varied opportunities to pursue walking, cycling, fishing, waterbased activities and other forms of sustainable recreation or relaxation.
- Sounds, sights, smells & tastes - A feeling of vitality and wellbeing that comes from enjoying the National Park’s fresh air, clean water, rural setting, open land, and locally produced foods.
- Sense of discovery - A sense of discovery where people explore the National Park’s hidden secrets and stories such as genealogical histories, prehistoric ritual sites, relic medieval rural settlements, early industrial sites, local myths and legends and geological treasures from time immemorial.
- Peace, tranquility & darkness - A National Park offering, dark, nighttime skies, peace and tranquility with opportunities for quiet enjoyment, inspiration, relaxation and spiritual renewal.
- Mosaic of diversity - The geology and climate vary greatly across the Park, creating an elaborate patchwork landscape rich in biodiversity. The Park hosts heathlands, grasslands and woodlands, with uplands and lowlands, natural lakes and riparian habitats. The Park contains limestone pavement and blanket bogs of international and national importance. Several endangered

species survive in the Park, including some for which the Park is their furthest extent of their natural range.

- Living landscape - An abundance of wildlife thrives in semi-natural habitats that have been lived in and shaped by human settlement for millennia. The landscape is interlaced with ancient hedgerows bustling with life, enclosing wildlife-rich hay meadows, and primeval woodlands that cloak some steep-sided valleys. Veteran trees adorn the landscape, carrying the scars of centuries of changing dependency on their resources. Heather-dominated uplands maintained through grazing by horses, sheep and cattle are a testament to the intimate relationship between biodiversity and farming.

Sense of history: The Bannau Brecheiniog exhibit the results of glacial activity as the ice sheet retreated. The hills and particularly the northern scarp was incised by glaciers, there are also some well-preserved glacial scree and moraines. Humans have been active in this landscape since the end of the last ice age and traces of human habitation in the form of prehistoric stone circles and burial chambers, Iron Age hillforts and Roman camps.

The Bannau Brecheiniog are also home to a large number of castles built by the Normans, and other examples of built heritage include priories and medieval farmhouses. Land use encompassed the provision of firewood, turf, peat and gravel, and as grazing for sheep, cattle and pigs. The landscape is also crossed by many trackways which were used over the centuries by drovers to take their livestock to market.

The Industrial Revolution saw significant change with limestone, silica sand and ironstone were quarried on the fringes of the Park to feed demand from the furnaces of the South Wales Valleys. Associated infrastructure included the construction and operation of the Monmouthshire canal which connected with a network of tramroads and railways and became important transport corridors for the movement of goods and materials. As well as industrial structures, the Georgian and Victorian age brought some fine urban and rural buildings to the area, some of which still retain their original features.

The Bannau Brecheiniog also has a long history of links with the military from its use as a cavalry base by the Romans to modern day training³⁹.

Leisure and recreation: Tourism and leisure form key mainstays of the local economy. People regularly come here for the special landscape, for outdoor activities and for the superb food and drink available locally. Walking is by far the most popular of the more active pursuits, but cycling, mountain biking, horse riding and fishing are all enjoyed on a wide scale. More specialist activities you can take part in are caving, canoeing, sailing, hang-gliding and parascending⁴¹.

The Bannau Brycheiniog have also been declared an International Dark Sky Reserve due to its sky views at night and little light pollution, this is a highly acclaimed stargazing location.

³⁹ <http://www.breconbeacons.org/history>

Zone F: Eastern South Wales Valleys

Supporting Services

Supporting services are those which are essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services. This includes the relationship between underlying geology and soil character, soil formation and the processes of plant growth, including pollination.

Geology and soil character: The Eastern South Wales Valleys have predominantly Lower Devonian sandstone & conglomerate interbedded bedrock geology (see **Diagram D2.1**). The area also has limestone with subordinate sandstone & argillaceous rocks as well as mudstone, siltstone, sandstone, coal, ironstone & ferricrete. Similar to the uplands of the Bannau Brycheiniog and Black Mountains, this area also has poor to very poor quality soils

Soil formation: Agriculture relies on soil formation, nutrients, water flow and pollination. The uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood. As long as they are free from the effects of heavy grazing, upland peat bogs store carbon and combat atmospheric pollution. They capture atmospheric carbon which helps mitigate the effects of climate change¹.

Pollination: by insects also provides a supporting service for primary production to support both agricultural production and nature conservation. However, the serious consequences of significant declines in insect pollinator populations, considered largely to result from the loss of flower-rich habitat, habitat fragmentation and the use of certain pesticides, has been recognised in the government's National Pollinator Strategy² and the creation of initiatives such as B-Lines³ to promote landscape-scale habitat creation to try and reverse the decline in pollinating insects.

¹ The Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028

² Defra (November 2014). The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England.

³ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-wales/>

With respect to Monmouthshire as a whole, the green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in SE Wales⁴ identifies those areas where pollinators directly contribute to supporting human life and food, notably where there is the high demand in urban areas for pollinators for fruit and vegetables in gardens and allotments. The action plan also points out that there is only a relatively small percentage of arable land that comprises crops such as oilseed rape which need pollinators, and this is concentrated in the lowland arable areas of Monmouthshire. Other areas such as, for example, nature reserves, have indirect requirements for pollinators.

The Action Plan provides a framework for identifying appropriate areas and types of land where interventions to support pollinators could be delivered, and provides a variety of recommendations and desired outcomes for measuring success. In terms of broad measures of success, the Action Plan reports a success rate of approximately 90% for the use of yellow rattle as a means of reducing the vigour of grass growth (thereby allowing a more floristically rich sward to develop) and it also identifies the inter-relationship between the County's 'cut and collect' grass mowing regime for maintaining grasslands (e.g. roadside verges), which is a key management tool in maintaining floral diversity, and the generation of biomass for energy production.

⁴ TACP (2015). Green infrastructure action plan for pollinators in South-east Wales. Report to Monmouthshire County Council on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils December 2015. TACP UK Ltd.

Provisioning Services

Provisioning services relate to the supply of goods such as freshwater, food and fuel.

Water availability: The uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release by virtue of their peat-forming and water storing wetlands, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood.

Food provision: The lower lying land on the lower slopes and valleys is utilised for sheep grazing and dairy farming, with some smaller areas of arable farming where good drainage allows. Higher land, much of which are commons, tends to be sheep grazed. Some localised areas of farmland have been turned over to other uses, including diversification of business activities such as solar or wind power generation. These diversifying factors can influence productivity and, importantly, how separate land parcels are managed in a landscape that requires a coherent approach to, for example, land drainage.

Fuel & fibre: The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park offers a variety of landscapes capable of providing sources of clean, sustainable energy. The National Park Authority provides guidance on the provision of: standalone wind turbine power generation; heat pumps; woodfuel and biomass heating systems and micro and small-scale hydro power systems. With respect to the volume of biomass that could realistically be harvested, however, there may be restrictions on the size of any associated power plant. As an alternative the biomass could form one stream of supply to an existing plant, but the value of this would need to be considered in relation to the embedded energy costs associated with transportation.

The Renewable Energy Community Scheme¹ (RECS) completed a feasibility study in 2017 to consider the inter-relationship between small-scale 'green' energy generation and natural floodplain management to control surface water flooding. The feasibility study has been undertaken around Monmouth, but its key findings are intended to be applicable county-wide. The aims of the project

were to:

- Identify acreage suitable for woodland planting which, with sustainable management provide fuel for community heating schemes, the contribution these plantings would make to the reduction of surface water run-off; any land management that would assist in additional reduction of surface water run-off;
- Advise on the contribution to the reduction of surface water run-off from community orchards; and,
- Identify suitable watercourses for the installation of micro hydro schemes with the direct benefit of providing power for local community use.

The Feasibility Study has also created a RECS 'Effectiveness Calculator', which estimates the reduction in run-off and flashiness of a run-off event that could result from a particular action or intervention, based on a suite of site specific data.

¹ <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects/projects/recs-renewable-energy-community-schemes>

Regulating Services

Regulating services maintain natural systems that include water quality, flooding, soil erosion and coastal processes.

Climate regulation: Eroding peat bog is a particular feature of the National Park with the largest concentration of this degraded habitat in Wales. Reversing this is an important contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change through land management. The range of likely climatic responses from west to east requiring differing responses in one unified area highlights the strategic role that the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park can play, as a barometer of change. The range of likely changes includes:

- Average summer temperatures in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - in the west of the Park increases are very likely to be between 1-2oC and 5-6oC warmer; in the east of the Park increases are very likely to be between 2-3oC and 6-7oC warmer.
- Average summer precipitation in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - summer precipitation is very likely to decline by 40-50% and very unlikely to increase by 0-10%, i.e., the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park may experience between 10% more and 50% less rainfall in the summer months.
- Average winter precipitation in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park: - increases in winter precipitation are very likely to be up to 60-70% in the west and 40-60% in the east.

Without intervention through catchment management, these precipitation changes represent a significant risk to water supplies to south Wales; less rainfall in the summer and more in the winter amounts to a net loss overall because the excess water falling during the winter months will exceed storage capacity and will therefore run off the land into the rivers, exacerbating flood risks.

Regulating water quality: Within the National Park there are large areas of severely degraded blanket bog and wet heath, the degree of erosion and oxidation of which is adversely affecting water quality and natural water storage, in a part of Wales where water quality and supply are critical to a large section of the population ¹. Additionally, The declining numbers of livestock on the upland commons within the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park increase the risk of uncontrolled fires on large areas of dry Molinia-dominated moorland, which would further undermine the water quality and water conservation of this strategically important area. Conversely, there are also signs that the peat-forming and water-holding Sphagnum mosses are recovering in places where grazing pressure and trampling is reduced, which is also due to improvements in air quality.

Regulating water (flooding): The upper part of the Usk catchment into the Bannau Brycheiniog demonstrates a flow regime with rapid rainfall runoff, caused by the steep sided narrow valleys and thin soils underlain by mainly impermeable rock; resulting in the lower reach flood plains becoming inundated during periods of heavy rainfall (see **Diagram D2.3**).

Regulating soil erosion and quality: The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park includes areas of deep peat and degraded bog which without buffering, is likely to lead to the degradation and loss of peat and soils with attendant impacts on water quality and downstream flooding risk.

¹ BBNP (July 2009). Brecon Beacons National Park: a good place for Glastir Sustainable Land Management Scheme

Cultural Services

Cultural services provide direct, non-material, benefits to human society, addressing a range of social and cultural needs that encompass a sense of place and inspiration, a sense of history, tranquillity and recreation.

Sense of place and inspiration: The Eastern South Wales Valleys are categorised by an extensive wild and wind-swept plateau with intervening deep valleys¹. The high ground is often scenic and tranquil with extensive views, for example at Bloreng ridge. The landscape is well known for its extensive industrial coal and ironworking heritage.

Sense of history: The Industrial Revolution saw significant change with limestone, silica sand and ironstone quarried on the fringes of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park to feed demand from the furnaces of the South Wales Valleys. Associated infrastructure included the construction and operation of the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal which passes through Govilon. The canal connected with a network of tramroads and railways and became important transport corridors for the movement of goods and material. The Blaenavon World Heritage Site is one of the best surviving examples in the region of a valley head industrial community, with features from the C18th iron industry as well as the extensive coal mining activity that took place in the 19th Century.

Leisure and recreation: The Blaenavon World Heritage Site is a registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest which attracts visitors interested in the industrial history of the area. The Eastern South Wales Valleys is a popular area for outdoor activities including mountain biking and hiking. The Valleys Regional Park has a network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves, country parks, rivers, reservoirs, canals, heritage sites and attractions, all interlinked with towns and villages². The high level of accessible natural greenspace provides opportunities for leisure and recreation in the area through walking trails and cycle networks.

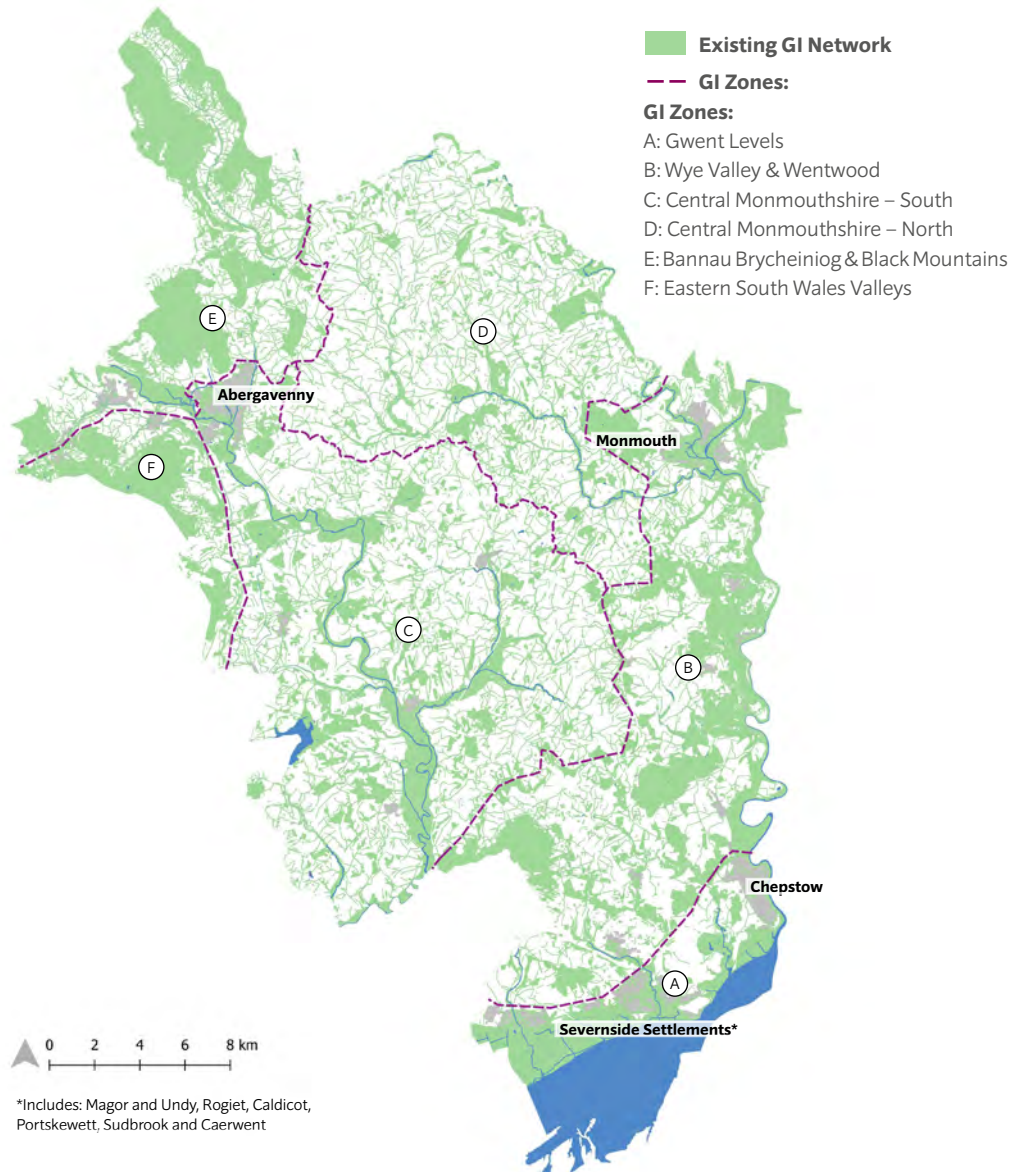
¹ <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/strategies-and-plans/area-statements/south-east-wales-area-statement/introduction-to-south-east-area-statement/?lang=en>

² <https://valleysregionalpark.wales/>



Green Infrastructure Needs and Opportunities

DIAGRAM D3.1 GI Zones



The existing GI network represents GI assets defined by the following datasets: Greenspace Study (excluding non-natural greenspace), Open Space Study, county-wide public rights of way, county-wide designated sites of nature conservation value, county-wide designated features of historic value, county-wide watercourses and water bodies, predominantly undeveloped floodplains (flood risk areas), and county-wide woodlands. See Appendix B for details.

Zone A: Gwent Levels

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone A: Gwent Levels. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is a need to improve access and recreation facilities for local communities and visitors to the Gwent Levels. There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation. Engagement with the natural and cultural heritage of the Gwent Levels is key to the conservation of this remarkable landscape for future generations.

The GI opportunities outlined in this section were informed by the Gwent Levels GI Strategy, which should be referenced for further details.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of GI in the Gwent Levels sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to the countryside for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing and connecting with the Gwent Levels landscape and heritage for local and wider communities, while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes (such as the Wales Coast Path) and creating new ones where appropriate

- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments, while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Urban Green Grids: Developing targeted programmes of accessible green space improvements and new provision for the Chepstow and the Severnside Settlements (Magor-Caldicot) to address inequalities for communities experiencing high levels of health deprivation

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and well-being needs within the Gwent Levels GI Zone could include:

- Focusing investment on improving/enhancing distinctive places, gateways and access routes within the study area that have a role to play in helping people to engage with, appreciate and enjoy the key landscape themes and attributes that make the Gwent Levels special.
- Maximising opportunities presented by a level landscape for cycling and encouraging healthier lifestyles by providing traffic free cycle routes that cater for all abilities and provide a low impact form of access to ecologically sensitive sites for local people and visitors.
- Reviewing 'gaps' in the route of the Wales Coast Path (as part of the review of the Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations) to consider again the re-alignment of the path where it diverges from the sea wall such as: south of Caldicot.
- Enhancing connectivity between the Levels and local communities/greenspaces in the Monmouthshire Severnside Settlements.
- Considering opportunities to enhance intellectual access to and understanding of the Gwent Levels' unique landscape, history and wildlife, such as through the promotion of 'citizens science' projects via outreach programmes for researching, identifying and recording the ecological and historical interest of the Gwent Levels.

- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocations at Moun-ton Road Chepstow and Caldicot East, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The biodiversity value of the extensive network of field drainage ditches and reens is vulnerable to neglect through lack of appropriate maintenance, changes in drainage and land use. This is essential to increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Gwent Levels sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity (such as wetlands, grasslands and intertidal habitats), and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green spaces and corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; improving the management of ditches/reens; preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and ground waters; developing a nutrient management plan; and developing river restoration plans and natural flood management plans for restoring rivers back to good ecological condition and to build resilience against future changes.

- Urban Green Grids: Developing programmes for delivering wildlife site management improvements and habitat creation for the Chepstow and Severnside Settlements (Magor-Caldicot) Urban Green Grids to support urban nature recovery

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Gwent Levels GI Zone could include:

- Restoring over-drained or damaged wet grasslands, and reinstating traditional water management techniques and groundwater levels, where appropriate.
- Working through co-ordinated and collaborative management with existing projects, and specifically across the suite of nature reserves, as well as through emerging initiatives, to deliver enhanced land and water management and habitat connectivity, as well as informed and continuing engagement with local communities and user groups.
- Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.
- Identifying inter-tidal habitat creation opportunities in partnership with NRW on land under their ownership, particularly where it occurs near the seawall.
- Enhancing the biodiversity value of saltmarsh beyond the sea wall by managing overgrazing (and fly grazing) and under-grazing of this important inter-tidal habitat to reduce negative effects on the botanical and ecological interest.
- Diversifying the grassland sward on the seawall banks, without compromising its integrity or the ability to inspect the condition/integrity of the sea defences, should be considered. Increasing floristic diversity and implementing a sympathetic mowing regime has the potential for the creation of a grassland habitat corridor for the support of pollinators.
- Raising awareness of the importance of the roosting and feeding areas for birds around the coast and estuaries and the relationship to the inland wetlands of the Gwent Levels, ensuring that they are adequately protected, managed and enhanced.

- Identifying opportunities along the larger watercourses where river banks could potentially be set back to increase riparian habitats.
- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocations at Moun-ton Road Chepstow and Caldicot East, such as enhancing ecological connections for wildlife.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

The extensive network of field drainage ditches and reens are one of the most distinctive landscape features of the Gwent Levels, which is a unique hand-crafted cultural landscape. There is a need to maintain and restore these, along with other historic landscape features, where appropriate.

Opportunities for addressing these needs within the Gwent Levels GI Zone could include:

- Encouraging the reinstatement of historic drainage features to maintain the drainage system as a distinctive landscape feature of the Gwent Levels by giving consideration to reinstating lost field ditches and grips; and managing riparian vegetation to reduce the dominance of double-hedged ditches and reens in order to restore their traditional open character.
- Maintaining water levels to protect as yet undiscovered buried archaeology associated with the Gwent Levels' unique landscape history.
- Discouraging field enlargement and/or the infilling of field ditches that would result in the loss of watercourses, leading to the erosion of the strong geometric pattern in the landscape, and the abandonment of traditional channel management practices.
- Promoting the restoration and/or continued management of pollard willows along drains, ditches, reens, roadsides and tracks, to reinforce traditional landscape character and enhance habitat connectivity, and providing small-scale, localised sources of wood fuel.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

In the context of the challenges presented by climate change and rising sea levels, there is a need to continue working with and adapting to the natural estuarine processes related to the Severn Estuary and the associated river estuaries. There is also a fundamental need to manage water and the network of watercourses within the Gwent Levels. This is essential for maximising GI benefits such as improved flood management, water and soil quality.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Gwent Levels sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to implement sustainable farming practices for improving the ability of soil to store carbon, and identify landscape-scale habitat restoration and tree planting projects to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream; and reducing the risk of flooding through maintenance of existing flood defences and implementation of managed coastal sea defence realignment projects where appropriate
- Urban Green Grids: Developing programmes to increase urban green cover and the tree canopy within green spaces, along streets and on buildings/ structures for the Chepstow and Severnside Settlements (Magor-Caldicot) Urban Green Grids to make urban communities more resilient and adaptable to climate change

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Gwent Levels GI Zone could include:

- Developing a landscape-scale approach to wetland management in general and in particular, maintaining and restoring a functioning ditch and reen system. Multiple benefits that may accrue through a landscape-scale approach include: managing aquatic and marginal vegetation to maintain the function and conservation interest of ditches and reens in appropriate locations compatible with flood risk management objectives; the maintenance of a healthy, productive, farmland landscape; and the control and management of flood risk.
- Maintaining and restoring water management infrastructure – pumps, sluices and other control mechanisms, ditches, reens, drains and grips, as well as the sea wall – to minimise the impact of flooding on people and property.
- Researching and exploring innovative approaches and options to address water management that potentially benefit both the natural environment and agriculture. Also, exploring mechanisms that release land to make space for more water storage and gravity drainage, including land purchase, land swaps, payment for ecosystem services schemes and farmer early retirement schemes.
- Encouraging participation in the delivery of objectives identified in relevant River Basin Management Plans. These include: initiatives to manage diffuse pollution arising from urban areas, new development, agriculture and rural land management; control of invasive non-native species; management of potential conflicts between different user groups; management of adequate water levels and active river processes; mechanisms for reducing pressure from abstraction and the restoration of aquatic habitats and species, as identified for the River Usk.
- Applying policy and good practice guidance to ensure the incorporation of sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) into all new development, in order to minimise uncontrolled surface water flows onto the Gwent Levels.
- Undertaking studies to determine the extent to which upland watersheds influence both the quantity and quality of water on the Gwent Levels. In particular, the influence of changes in agricultural practices, commercial forestry and long-term landscape change resulting from significant tree loss through disease, may all influence the future water resources of the Levels.
- Aiming to develop a more diverse range of habitats, vegetation types and structures within holdings, enabling habitats and species to respond to the effects of climate change, while maintaining viable farming businesses, cultural associations and traditions and the overall character of the area.
- Ensuring that the Seven Estuary Shoreline Management Plan continues to recognise the outstanding historic landscape significance and high nature conservation value of the Gwent Levels, and the fundamental role that the sea defences plays in sustaining these interests. Working in partnership with all those with a stake in the long-term sustainability of the area is critical to develop consensus around approaches to addressing the challenges of climate change, and its environmental and economic consequences.
- Incorporating coastal heritage sites into climate change adaptation plans, wherever possible, recording, promoting, understanding and recognising their historical significance and their contribution to local culture and coastal landscape character.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

There is a need to manage the landscape of the Gwent Levels sustainably. This includes a sustainable approach to farming, which is critical for supporting the protection of soils and water, biodiversity and locally distinctive landscapes in particular.

Opportunities for addressing these needs within the Gwent Levels GI Zone could include:

- Supporting the local farming community, where possible through agri-environment grants (Glastir or its post-Brexit successor scheme), encouraging flexibility in land management, where appropriate maintaining the existing mixed farming systems, conserving soils and increasing the floristic diversity of wet meadows.
- Advising landowners on the re-creation, where feasible, of habitats such as wet grassland, reedbeds and fens, in the context of maintaining commercially viable agricultural activity within the area. Where specific landholdings may no longer be commercially viable, consider opportunities for the diversification of land-use to encompass the creation or restoration of semi-natural habitats.
- Encouraging more extensive and sustainable land management (by means of appropriate stocking densities and the use of hardy traditional cattle breeds), reducing the risk of soil compaction and poaching, increasing opportunities for floristic diversity, promoting the sensitive uses of pesticide and fertiliser, and implementing manure management plans, reducing nutrient enrichment of watercourses and improving overall water quality.
- Promoting best practice in soil management, use of low-pressure machinery, and careful management of livestock near watercourses and bank sides, using grassland buffer strips and semi-natural habitats to enhance infiltration and protect watercourses from nutrient and sediment input.
- Identifying opportunities for farm business diversification through mechanisms such as premium brand marketing, use of traditional premium value hardy breeds, payment for ecosystem services, and linking the management of the Gwent Levels to upstream watersheds where relevant.
- Working in collaboration with landowners to realise the potential for landscape-scale restoration schemes in suitable areas where recutting of former ditches, removal of hedgerows and reseedling of grassland could be considered.
- There is an opportunity to support the Monmouthshire Destination Development Plan, where access to the countryside is a key part of Monmouthshire's offer.



Zone B: Wye Valley & Wentwood

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone B: Wye Valley & Wentwood. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy. This section should be read in conjunction with the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is a need to maintain, and where appropriate, improve access and recreation facilities for local communities and visitors to the Wye Valley. There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation. There is a need for people to continue to enjoy active recreation in the Wye Valley that does not detract from the natural beauty of the area. Engagement with the natural and cultural heritage of the Wye Valley is key to the conservation of this remarkable landscape for future generations.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of GI in the Wye Valley & Wentwood sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to the countryside for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing areas (such as Chepstow Park Wood and Wyewood Common Nature Reserve), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes (such as the Wye Valley Walk) and creating new ones where appropriate

- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments (such as the River Wye), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Urban Green Grids: Developing a targeted programme of accessible green space improvements and new provision for the Monmouth Urban Green Grid to address inequalities for communities experiencing high levels of health deprivation

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and wellbeing needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

- Promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic environment
- Increasing understanding, awareness and enjoyment of trees and the special nature of the Wye Valley woodlands and promote them as a resource for appropriate educational, community, recreational and health opportunities
- Encouraging community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment and retain or improve facilities and services for local people,
- Encouraging and promoting recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the National Landscape purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities.
- Supporting appropriate levels of sustainable design, repair, signage and maintenance on public rights of way, recreational trails and sites, using materials in keeping, in order to conserve or enhance the character and natural beauty of the Wye Valley.

- Assisting in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups, and work with appropriate bodies and stakeholders to support and promote access enhancements and improved access for all, where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the National Landscape and the SACs
- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Monmouth Leasbrook, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone is particularly rich in wildlife and has a high concentration of designated sites. The quality of the river and riverine habitat, with migratory fish and otters, are of European importance. Similarly the near continuous woodlands interspersed with species rich grassland make a high quality connected landscape. Managing this range of habitats appropriately is essential to maintain and increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience. There is a need to conserve, and where appropriate enhance and restore, the biodiversity of the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone in robust ecological networks.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Wye Valley & Wentwood sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity (such as native woodlands and ancient hedgerows), and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green spaces and corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)

- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; creating a joined-up approach to removing or modifying barriers to fish migration; preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and ground waters; developing a River Wye nutrient management plan; and developing river restoration plans and natural flood management plans for restoring rivers back to good ecological condition and to build resilience against future changes.
- Urban Green Grids: Developing programmes for delivering wildlife site management improvements and habitat creation for the Monmouth Urban Green Grid to support urban nature recovery

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

- Contributing to the delivery of national, regional and local Biodiversity targets and priorities for key habitats and species relevant to the Wye Valley, in partnership with relevant organisations.
- Encouraging and supporting measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local/key wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks.
- Promoting the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and/or restore the characteristic biodiversity of the Wye Valley, and that enable ecological systems and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through landscape scale habitat connectivity.
- Identifying species and diseases considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the Wye Valley and encourage their monitoring, management and, where appropriate, their control.

- Supporting the identification and monitoring of key indicator species and priority species and habitats, in partnership with conservation organisations, relevant individuals and the Local Biological Record Centres.
- Promoting awareness, sources of advice and involvement in biodiversity conservation by landowners, land managers, businesses, local communities, schools and the public including of impacts from outside the Wye Valley.
- Providing best practice advice to woodland owners and managers on sustainable multipurpose management of the Wye Valley woodlands, including sensitive PAWS restoration, encouraging 'the right tree in the right place' and the ecosystems approach.
- Supporting the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss.
- Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects as part of the B-Lines initiative.
- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Monmouth Leasbrook, such as enhancing ecological connections for wildlife.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

There is a need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape in the Wye Valley with its natural and cultural features and processes, and the special qualities and features of the landscape (including the pattern of woodlands, many of which are ancient; the strong network of thick hedges, hedge banks, drystone walls and tree lines; and the distinct sense of place from the relationship of the woodland, pasture and settlement). There is also a need to ensure woodlands and trees throughout the Wye Valley are managed

sustainably in a way that protects and enhances the outstanding ancient woodland character of the area, and provides environmental, social and economic benefits.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing landscape character and distinctiveness needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

- Promoting and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the National Landscape. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features.
- Supporting measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley.
- Seeking to mitigate and/or reduce, or as a last resort remove, agricultural activity which significantly diminishes or destroys the Special Qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the National Landscape.
- Developing and supporting tree, woodland and forestry initiatives and policy that conserve, restore and/or enhance the Special Qualities, biodiversity and natural beauty of the area, ensuring no net loss of semi-natural woodland cover unless there are overriding nature or heritage conservation benefits.
- Encouraging and supporting high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage and landscaping in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and that they complement and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and minimise the impact on the natural environment.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

In the context of the challenges presented by climate change, which threaten to degrade distinctive landscape features and wildlife habitats; there is a need

to adapt and arrest destructive change in places. Species diversification is very much at the core of woodland adaptation and ensuring resilience in the future. There is also a fundamental need to manage water appropriately. This is essential for maximising GI benefits such as improved flood management, water and soil quality.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Wye Valley & Wentwood sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to implement sustainable farming practices for improving the ability of soil to store carbon, and identify landscape-scale habitat restoration and tree planting projects to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream.
- Urban Green Grids: Developing a programme to increase urban green cover and the tree canopy within green spaces, along streets and on buildings/ structures for the Monmouth Urban Green Grid to make urban communities more resilient and adaptable to climate change

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

- Supporting and promoting the development of renewable forms of energy generation that do not impact negatively on the landscape features and Special Qualities of the National Landscape
- Promoting ecological connectivity and robust habitats in order to sustain diversity.
- Restoring habitats e.g. woodlands/vegetation, to help reduce flooding and offset air pollution whilst also conserving the key features and characteristics which have led to the National Landscape designation that make it so attractive to locals and visitors today.
- Providing sustainable urban drainage to absorb excess rainfall and ensuring the character of the river is not degraded.
- Contributing space to grow foods using sustainable methods thus promoting healthy diets for local communities but also enhancing biodiversity, providing jobs and educational benefits.
- Safeguarding accessible green space which helps reduce the effects of urban heat islands and also contributes to people's sense of health and well-being as well as having economic benefits relating to tourism.
- Reducing carbon emissions through encouraging alternative modes of transport by walking and cycling whilst also supporting health, well-being and tourism.
- Developing and co-ordinating the acquisition and analysis of data across the National Landscape, to inform priority setting, planning, implementation and monitoring of change affecting the natural beauty, including developing a better understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape of the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB and supporting mitigation and adaption actions.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

There is a need to manage and develop the landscape of the Wye Valley

sustainably. This includes a sustainable approach to development and management of environmental impacts in more built-up areas; and to farming, which is critical for supporting the protection of soils and water, biodiversity and locally distinctive landscapes in particular. Amongst the purposes of the National Landscape is that 'particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment'. There is a need for this to include fostering viable farming enterprises that manage the land in ways that conserve and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the National Landscape.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing sustainable economic development needs within the Wye Valley & Wentwood GI Zone could include:

- Encouraging farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape AONB.
- Encouraging the maximum uptake of, agri-environment and other appropriate schemes, including support for small-holders, where they progress the conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, historic environment and Special Qualities of the National Landscape, particularly through Catchment Sensitive Farming and mixed farming systems.
- Supporting the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of National Landscape designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the National Landscape.
- Promoting a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy.
- Supporting all appropriate measures to control diseases of agricultural crops, trees and livestock, which threaten the commercial viability of farming systems that conserve the landscape character, ensuring that the measures remain compatible with the conservation and enjoyment of natural beauty.
- Encouraging and support local producers to supply local food and promote and encourage the use of local produce by public bodies, consumers, accommodation providers and local food outlets.
- Supporting the development of employment and skills and markets for local timber and woodland produce.



Zone C: Central Monmouthshire – South

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone C: Central Monmouthshire – South. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is potential to expand access and recreation facilities for local communities and visitors to the Central Monmouthshire – South Zone. There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to the countryside for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing areas (such as Clytha Park Country Park), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes (such as the Usk Valley Walk) and creating new ones where appropriate

- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments (such as the Llandegfedd Reservoir and the River Usk), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Urban Green Grids: Developing a targeted programme of accessible green space improvements and new provision for the Abergavenny and Usk Urban Green Grids to address inequalities for communities experiencing high levels of health deprivation

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and wellbeing needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

- Providing interpretation for existing pedestrian/cycle paths, rights of way and walking routes connecting settlement such as Usk and the Usk Valley via existing PRoW (for example, the Usk Valley Walk) and cycle routes.
- Strengthening cycle route links along river valleys, links into national and regional cycle networks.
- Linking to healthy walking schemes and groups, as well as 'Health Walks', which can be prescribed by GPs.
- Expanding provision of pedestrian paths, rights of way and cycling routes to connect development via existing woodlands, open and green spaces to the wider countryside and key destinations including the Monmouth/Brecon canal and the River Usk.
- Enhancing existing green spaces and integration of green infrastructure into refurbishment or development of community assets such as local primary schools and publically owned or managed sites.

- Expanding allotment provision where appropriate around settlements.
- Improving access to currently inaccessible green spaces, such as areas of privately or estate run woodland, and less accessible common land.
- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Abergavenny East, such as provision of pedestrian/cycle links and greenspaces for people.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The biodiversity value of the network of watercourses and woodlands is vulnerable to neglect through lack of appropriate maintenance, changes in drainage and land use. This is essential to increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- **Strategic Green Space & Corridors:** Working with a range of partners to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity (such as restoration of floodplain meadows), and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green spaces and corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)
- **Strategic Blue Space & Corridors:** Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; creating a joined-up approach to removing or modifying barriers to fish migration (such as on the River Gavenny and the Honddu); preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and

ground waters; developing a River Usk Special Area of Conservation nutrient management plan; and developing river restoration plans and natural flood management plans for restoring rivers back to good ecological condition and to build resilience against future changes.

- **Urban Green Grids:** Developing programmes for delivering wildlife site management improvements and habitat creation for the Abergavenny and Usk Urban Green Grids to support urban nature recovery

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

- Eradicating and/or management of invasive non-native species in line with current national invasive species action plans, including Giant Hogweed.
- Reducing the impact of physical modifications to water courses, improving connectivity, habitat and morphology through soft engineering and restoration techniques. Improving habitats for fish, removing or modifying barriers to passage upstream.
- Reducing the impact of flood defence structures and operations - improve connectivity, habitat, and morphology by implementing options through measures such as soft engineering, opening culverts, upgrading tidal flaps, changing dredging and vegetation management.
- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats to enhance existing green spaces, including restoration of semi-improved pasture and restoration of woodland.
- Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.
- Considering opportunities to incorporate GI into the Preferred Strategic Site Allocation at Abergavenny East, such as enhancing ecological connections for wildlife

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

The extensive network of woodland (covering approximately 10% of the zone) is one of the most distinctive landscape features of the Wye Catchment. There is a need to maintain and enhance these green links, along with other historic landscape features, where appropriate.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing landscape character and distinctiveness needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

- Enhancing green links within development to strengthen existing settlement character, including key views into and out of settlements and reinforcing sense of place.
- Strengthening settlement edge treatments, reinforcing character, vernacular styles and boundary treatments.
- Researching, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and conserving archaeology.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

In the context of the challenges presented by climate change, there is a fundamental need to manage water appropriately. This is essential for maximising GI benefits such as improved flood management, water and soil quality.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to implement sustainable farming practices for improving the ability of soil to store carbon, and identify landscape-scale habitat restoration projects to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream (such as extending and connecting floodplain woodlands).
- Urban Green Grids: Developing programmes to increase urban green cover and the tree canopy within green spaces, along streets and on buildings/ structures for the Abergavenny and Usk Urban Green Grids to make urban communities more resilient and adaptable to climate change

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

- Improving water levels and flows, reducing impacts of more regulated flows and abstractions, restoring more natural flow regimes and implementing options to improve water levels, such as water efficiency and recycling measures, alternative sources and supplies.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

There is a need to manage the landscape of the Usk Catchment sustainably. This includes a sustainable approach to development and management of environmental impacts in more urban areas; and to farming, which is critical for supporting the protection of soils and water, biodiversity and locally distinctive landscapes in particular.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing sustainable economic development needs within the Central Monmouthshire – South GI Zone could include:

- Identifying and implementing changes to land drainage regimes and structures to restore water levels.
- Reducing pollution from waste water discharges at point sources. Investigate and implement basic pollution prevention measures, including provision of up to date advice and guidance, such as correct handling and storage of chemicals and waste, management of trade effluent, and regulation.
- Supporting implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, including the implementation of measures such as correct management of slurry, silage, fuel oil, and agricultural chemicals; clean and dirty water separation; nutrient management planning; buffer strips and riparian fencing; cover crops and soil management.
- Supporting sustainable woodland and forestry management, restoring the riparian zone, disconnecting forest drains and using forestry and woodland to reduce diffuse pollution.
- Investigating opportunities to solve misconceptions to surface water drains (at residential and commercial properties) and implement sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) to reduce diffuse pollution.
- Supporting water management; careful management of the various users—Llandegfedd Reservoir: Recreation and Conservation Management Plan, consultation with the Llandegfedd Reservoir User Liaison Group
- Supporting the local farming community, where possible through agri-environment grants (Glastir or its post-Brexit successor scheme), encouraging flexibility in land management, where appropriate maintaining the existing mixed farming systems, and conserving soils.



Zone D: Central Monmouthshire – North

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone D: Central Monmouthshire – North. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is potential to expand access and recreation facilities for local communities and visitors to the Central Monmouthshire – North Zone. There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and well-being needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and well-being benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to the countryside for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing areas, while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes (such as the Offa's Dyke Path) and creating new ones where appropriate

- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments (such as the River Monnow), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and well-being needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:

- Expanding provision of pedestrian paths, rights of way and creation or linking of circular walking routes (for example, the Three Castles Walk) to connect settlements via existing PROW and accessible green space. Connections between the core area where people live and work would also be beneficial. Opportunities also exist to improve access for horse riding with new bridleways/multi-use paths, and to create new cycle route links, connecting to local networks and to the Wye Valley beyond.
- Improving promotion and provision of interpretation for existing pedestrian/cycle paths, rights of way and walking routes.
- Linking to healthy walking schemes and groups, as well as 'Health Walks', which can be prescribed by GPs.
- Increasing allotment provision around smaller settlements.
- Facilitating new or enhanced green space provision; community spaces and play areas.
- Improving the condition of riverbanks, and the creation of fish passes will result in improved habitat for wildlife, and increase the sustainability of fish populations. Benefits to society will include an increase in angling opportunities and general enjoyment of spending time by the river.

- Enhancing existing green spaces and integration of green infrastructure into refurbishment/development of local community assets such as primary schools, and publically owned/managed sites
- Within settlements, linking green spaces between housing.
- Improving riverside access.
- Facilitating access to green spaces close to home rather than travelling to facilities further afield.
- Encouraging local people to become part of PRow maintenance groups, and to expand this beyond the current demographic.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The biodiversity value of the network of watercourses and woodlands is vulnerable to neglect through lack of appropriate maintenance, changes in drainage and land use. This is essential to increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity (such as restoration of floodplain meadows), and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green spaces and corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)
 - Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; creating a joined-up approach to removing or modifying barriers to fish migration (such as on the River Monnow); preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and ground waters; and developing river restoration plans and natural flood management plans for restoring rivers back to good ecological condition and to build resilience against future changes.
- Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:
- Improving modified habitats in watercourses, including the removal of barriers to fish migration; improvement to the condition of river channels/beds and/or banks/shoreline; improvement to condition of riparian zone and/or wetland habitats and through vegetation management. Buffer strips and improvements to the condition of riverbanks will help to protect soils, limiting the amount washed away when it rains.
 - Managing invasive non-native species, building awareness and understanding (to slow the spread); and using mitigation, control and eradication to reduce extents.
 - Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats providing additional/expansion plantings and habitat to enhance existing green spaces, River Monnow, riverside habitats, managing existing habitats for protected species and maintaining/enabling sensitive public access.
 - Improving forestry management, including, where appropriate, replacing with mixed native species and the opportunity to manage forest clearance areas.
 - Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

The extensive network of woodland (covering approximately 10% of the zone) is one of the most distinctive landscape features of the Wye Catchment. There is a need to maintain and enhance these green links, along with other historic landscape features, where appropriate.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing landscape character and distinctiveness needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:

- Reinforcing landscape character by creating a multi-use, permeable green edge to settlements, that better integrates with surrounding vegetation pattern
- Improving and enhancing green links within new and proposed development to enhance existing settlement character, reinforce sense of place and improve links to the wider area
- Researching, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and conserving archaeology.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

In the context of the challenges presented by climate change, there is a fundamental need to manage water appropriately. This is essential for maximising GI benefits such as improved flood management, water and soil quality.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Central Monmouthshire sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to implement sustainable farming practices for improving the ability of soil to store carbon, and identify landscape-scale habitat restoration projects to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems

- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream (such as extending and connecting floodplain woodlands).

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:

- Improving natural flows and water levels, using alternative sources and relocating abstraction or discharge points. Improvements to water treatment and restrictions on groundwater abstraction should improve river flows and will increase the enjoyment of the water environment for local communities and improve habitats for wildlife. The farming community will also benefit from an increase in surface water availability.
- Increasing use of SUDS and river buffer zones, helping to hold water back in the catchment and therefore helping to reduce runoff and flood risk.
- Considering the need for more winter storage reservoirs, as rainfall may change in amount and distribution through the year.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

There is a need to manage the landscape of the Wye Catchment sustainably. This includes a sustainable approach to development and management of environmental impacts in more urban areas; and to farming, which is critical for supporting the protection of soils and water, biodiversity and locally distinctive landscapes in particular.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing sustainable economic development needs within the Central Monmouthshire – North GI Zone could include:

- Managing pollution from towns and transport by reducing diffuse pollution at source (particularly in relation to Monmouth).
- Managing pollution in rural areas (including from agriculture), reducing diffuse pollution at source, reduce diffuse pollution pathways (i.e. controlling entry to the water environment); and mitigating or remediating diffuse pollution impacts.
- Managing pollution from waste water through mitigating or remediating point source impacts on watercourses.
- Developing a coherent approach to managing a landscape which is diversifying in land use – to include a range of agricultural uses, solar and wind energy generation.
- Developing biomass and wood fuel production.
- Supporting the local farming community, where possible through agri-environment grants (Glastir or its post-Brexit successor scheme), encouraging flexibility in land management, where appropriate maintaining the existing mixed farming systems, and conserving soils.



Zone E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy. This section should be read in conjunction with the Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation. Opportunities for outdoor access and recreation are one of the key purposes of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, so there is a need to provide these. The National Park contributes directly to the health and well-being of the nation, not only through its inspirational beauty, but also from the wide range of activities the unique landscape enables. There is a need to carefully manage activities for outdoor access and recreation to ensure that the Park's special qualities are preserved and enhanced.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of GI in the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to the countryside for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing areas (such as the Black Mountains, Sugar Loaf and Skirrid), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising

- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes (such as the Cambrian Way and Beacons Way), and creating new ones where appropriate
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments (such as the River Usk), while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising.

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and well-being needs within the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains GI Zone could include:

- Implementing a variety of education, information and interpretation strategies, and to deliver an environmental education programme.
- Enhancing the visitor experience of wildlife, farming, landscape and environment.
- Increasing awareness of and provision for people with disabilities and easier access requirements through the implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Providing access information in a variety of formats, including communicating information on safety and ecosystems. Develop a coordinated approach for providing information and interpretation to visitors and residents.
- Increasing access by linking promoted routes and public transport.
- Increasing the health and well-being benefit to excluded groups. Develop innovative ways of engaging and interacting with visitors and residents including those excluded by actual or perceived barriers.

- Developing and maintaining access on Wildlife Trust-owned reserves.
- Increasing the ease of use of the Public Rights of Way network (management plan targets 65% or above easy to use).
- Supporting the development of allotments, where appropriate.
- Exploring opportunities to improve provision of pedestrian paths, rights of way and further circular walking routes to connect existing National and regional trails, sites of interest and settlements via accessible green space. There are potential opportunities for numerous shorter trails to links into existing settlements although provision in the area is already good.
- Providing PRoW improvements and enhancements and ongoing maintenance, including improving or maintaining signage and access, and maintaining or upgrading interpretation as appropriate.
- Improving accessibility, including permissive paths to privately owned woodlands, and to habitats of conservation interest or heritage sites near to PRoW access
- Improving access for horse riding where appropriate, to include bridleways and multi-use paths.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The biodiversity value of the heathlands, grasslands, woodlands and watercourses are of importance to the National Park. Maintaining and enhancing this network of habitats is important as it is vulnerable to neglect through lack of appropriate maintenance, changes in drainage and land use. This sustainable approach is essential to increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- **Strategic Green Space & Corridors:** Working with a range of partners to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity, and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)
- **Strategic Blue Space & Corridors:** Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; creating a joined-up approach to removing or modifying barriers to fish migration; and preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and ground waters

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains GI Zone could include:

- Promoting benefits of high nature value farming.
- Expanding native woodlands and maintain forests, and to practice continuous forestry cover techniques.
- Restoring internationally recognised habitats, and restoring and enhancing habitat connectivity along river valleys.
- Developing monitoring of key habitats, soils and water, and to develop research partnerships.
- Implementing a living landscapes approach to landscape, habitat and wildlife management.

- Prioritising understanding of water and carbon resources management.
- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats, providing management recommendation/support where land is not in public ownership. This should include improving biodiversity value for protected species
- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats providing management recommendations or support where habitats have been degraded.
- Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

The Bannau Brycheiniog Uplands is a diverse and distinctive landscape, where sweeping uplands contrast with green valleys, dramatic waterfalls, ancient woodland, archaeological sites, caves, forests, reservoirs and vibrant communities. There is a need to conserve and enhance this character.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing landscape character and distinctiveness needs within the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains GI Zone could include:

- Researching, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and conserving archaeology.
- Implementing an area-based land management project.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

The Bannau Brycheiniog Uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood. As long as they are free from the effects of heavy grazing, upland peat bogs store carbon and combat atmospheric pollution and illegal fires. They capture atmospheric carbon which helps mitigate the effects of climate change. There is a need to manage the uplands appropriately to sustain these functions.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to implement sustainable farming practices for improving the ability of soil to store carbon, and identify landscape-scale habitat restoration projects, especially peatland restoration in the uplands, to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of regional green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures such as afforestation, particularly in the uplands, to help to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream.

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains GI Zone could include:

- Encouraging and supporting community-led initiatives that build awareness of and resilience to climate change, fossil fuel depletion and carbon emissions and assure the well-being of communities in the future.
- Implementing measures to limit further erosion, and reverse the current erosion of peat bog.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

The National Park designation should benefit the local economy and local communities in ways that are sustainable and which work to conserve and enhance the Park's special qualities. The need for sensitive land management by and for the local farming community must be a priority, as is the requirement to establish new links and roles with local communities to foster sustainable economic development.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing sustainable economic development needs within the Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains GI Zone could include:

- Providing public benefits in the countryside through farming, working with farmers to capitalise on the National Park's status and to support them in changes to farm practices.
- Researching and supporting options for local food/produce marketing, and to promote the use of local food to businesses and visitors.
- Identifying on-farm, sustainable energy projects.
- Supporting the local farming community, where possible through agri-environment grants (Glastir or its post-Brexit successor scheme), encouraging flexibility in land management, where appropriate maintaining the existing mixed farming systems, and conserving soils.



Zone F: Eastern South Wales Valleys

This section explores opportunities for improving GI within Zone F: Eastern South Wales Valleys. The opportunities have been identified through analysis of existing studies, the ecosystem services described in **Appendix D2**, and stakeholder consultation workshops - see **Appendix C**. Where appropriate, these are aligned with the Gwent Green Grid Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy. This section should be read in conjunction with the Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023-2028

GI Needs & Opportunities for Improving Health & Wellbeing

There is growing evidence that access to, and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation. Opportunities for outdoor access and recreation are one of the key purposes of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, so there is a need to provide these. The National Park contributes directly to the health and well-being of the nation, not only through its inspirational beauty, but also from the wide range of activities the unique landscape enables. There is a need to carefully manage activities for outdoor access and recreation to ensure that the Park's special qualities are preserved and enhanced.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of GI in the Eastern South Wales Valleys sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Supporting responsible public access to urban green spaces and the wider countryside for outdoor recreation and urban food growing to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing these areas, while managing impacts of recreation activity and landscape crime on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising; and working with partners to develop and enhance strategic sites such as country parks and nature reserves as "Discovery Gateways" (such as the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre).

- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians by exploring opportunities for enhancing existing routes, and creating new ones where appropriate; and working with partners to identify opportunities to better connect active travel routes, walking trails, cycle networks, outdoor recreation destinations and access to urban community woodlands.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Supporting responsible public access to watercourses/waterbodies for outdoor recreation to maximise the health and well-being benefits of experiencing water environments, while managing impacts of recreation activity on natural and cultural heritage assets by engaging with outdoor activity providers and a public programme of awareness raising

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing health and well-being needs within the Eastern South Wales Valleys GI Zone could include:

- Implementing a variety of education, information and interpretation strategies, and to deliver an environmental education programme.
- Enhancing the visitor experience of wildlife, farming, landscape and environment.
- Increasing awareness of and provision for people with disabilities and easier access requirements through the implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Providing access information in a variety of formats, including communicating information on safety and ecosystems. Develop a coordinated approach for providing information and interpretation to visitors and residents.
- Increasing access by linking promoted routes and public transport.

- Increasing the health and well-being benefit to excluded groups. Develop innovative ways of engaging and interacting with visitors and residents including those excluded by actual or perceived barriers.
- Developing and maintaining access on Wildlife Trust-owned reserves.
- Increasing the ease of use of the Public Rights of Way network (management plan targets 65% or above easy to use).
- Supporting the development of allotments, where appropriate.
- Exploring opportunities to improve provision of pedestrian paths, rights of way and further circular walking routes to connect existing National and regional trails, sites of interest and settlements via accessible green space. There are potential opportunities for numerous shorter trails to links into existing settlements although provision in the area is already good.
- Providing PRoW improvements and enhancements and ongoing maintenance, including improving or maintaining signage and access, and maintaining or upgrading interpretation as appropriate.
- Improving accessibility, including permissive paths to privately owned woodlands, and to habitats of conservation interest or heritage sites near to PRoW access
- Improving access for horse riding where appropriate, to include bridleways and multi-use paths.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Enhancing Biodiversity & Increasing Ecosystem Resilience

A sustainable approach is critical for supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The biodiversity value of the heathlands, grasslands, woodlands and watercourses are of importance to the National Park. Maintaining and enhancing this network of habitats is important as it is vulnerable to neglect through lack of appropriate maintenance, changes in drainage and land use. This sustainable approach is essential to increase the range and extent of habitats and species and their resilience.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience benefits of GI in the Eastern South Wales Valleys sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- **Strategic Green Space & Corridors:** Working with a range of partners, including commoners and landowners, to identify landscape-scale projects to improve habitat condition, connectivity and diversity (such as the Bloreng SSSI), and support net biodiversity gain; providing habitats along green spaces and corridors for pollinator insects; and promoting biosecurity good practice measures for controlling invasive plant species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam)
- **Strategic Blue Space & Corridors:** Managing abstraction to ensure adequate flow and active river processes; preventing deterioration in Water Framework Directive water body status with the aim of achieving good overall status for surface and ground waters; developing a nutrient management plan; and developing river restoration plans and natural flood management plans for restoring rivers back to good ecological condition and to build resilience against future changes.

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience needs within the Eastern South Wales Valleys GI Zone could include:

- Promoting benefits of high nature value farming.
- Expanding native woodlands and maintain forests, and to practice continuous forestry cover techniques.
- Restoring internationally recognised habitats, and restoring and enhancing habitat connectivity along river valleys.
- Developing monitoring of key habitats, soils and water, and to develop research partnerships.
- Implementing a living landscapes approach to landscape, habitat and wildlife management.
- Prioritising understanding of water and carbon resources management.
- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats, providing management recommendation/support where land is not in public ownership. This should include improving biodiversity value for protected species
- Restoring or enhancing existing assets and habitats providing management recommendations or support where habitats have been degraded.
- Encouraging the diversification of habitats to include the creation, restoration and connectivity of flower-rich habitats to support and sustain pollinating insects.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Strengthening Landscape Character & Distinctiveness

The Bannau Brycheiniog Uplands is a diverse and distinctive landscape, where sweeping uplands contrast with green valleys, dramatic waterfalls, ancient woodland, archaeological sites, caves, forests, reservoirs and vibrant communities. There is a need to conserve and enhance this character.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing landscape character and distinctiveness needs within the Eastern South Wales Valleys GI Zone could include:

- Researching, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and conserving archaeology.
- Implementing an area-based land management project.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Climate and Nature Resilience

The Brecon Beacons Uplands play a significant role in water storage, quality and release, providing a natural defence against both drought and flood. As long as they are free from the effects of heavy grazing, upland peat bogs store carbon and combat atmospheric pollution and illegal fires. They capture atmospheric carbon which helps mitigate the effects of climate change. There is a need to manage the uplands appropriately to sustain these functions.

Strategic priorities and opportunities for optimising the climate change resilience and adaptation benefits of GI in the Eastern South Wales Valleys sub-area identified in the Gwent Green Grid Regional GI Strategy include:

- Strategic Green Space: Working with a range of partners to develop landscape-scale habitat restoration projects (such as peatland restoration in the uplands) to maximise carbon sequestration in existing ecosystems
- Strategic Green Corridors: Providing a coherent and joined up network of green corridors providing high quality, traffic-free active travel routes for cyclists, walkers and equestrians to support decarbonisation by reducing use of fossil fuel powered transport and carbon emissions.
- Strategic Blue Space & Corridors: Working with a range of partners as part of a catchment-based approach to identifying landscape-scale projects for implementing natural flood management measures to reduce surface water run-off and slow the flow, limiting flooding downstream.

Within this context, local opportunities for GI to help in addressing climate change resilience and adaptation needs within the Eastern South Wales Valleys GI Zone could include:

- Encouraging and supporting community-led initiatives that build awareness of and resilience to climate change, fossil fuel depletion and carbon emissions and assure the well-being of communities in the future.
- Implementing measures to limit further erosion, and reverse the current erosion of peat bog.

GI Needs & Opportunities for Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

The National Park designation should benefit the local economy and local communities in ways that are sustainable and which work to conserve and enhance the Park's special qualities. The need for sensitive land management by and for the local farming community must be a priority, as is the requirement to establish new links and roles with local communities to foster sustainable economic development.

Opportunities for GI to help in addressing sustainable economic development needs within the Eastern South Wales Valleys GI Zone could include:

- Providing public benefits in the countryside through farming, working with farmers to capitalise on the National Park's status and to support them in changes to farm practices.
- Researching and supporting options for local food/produce marketing, and to promote the use of local food to businesses and visitors.
- Identifying on-farm, sustainable energy projects.
- Supporting the local farming community, where possible through agri-environment grants (Glastir or its post-Brexit successor scheme), encouraging flexibility in land management, where appropriate maintaining the existing mixed farming systems, and conserving soils.

e

Planning Policy Wales 12 Extract - Chapter 6: Distinctive & Natural Places Green Infrastructure Policy



6.2 Green Infrastructure

6.2.1 Green infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks.

6.2.2 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, provides a context for the delivery of multi-functional green infrastructure. Its protection and provision can make a significant contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources, and in particular to protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in terms of the diversity within and connections between ecosystems and the extent and condition

of these ecosystems, so that they are better able to resist, recover from and adapt to pressures. This means that the development of green infrastructure is an important way for local authorities to deliver their Section 6 duty¹¹⁴.

6.2.3 Green infrastructure is capable of providing several functions at the same time and as a result offers multiple benefits, for social, economic and cultural as well as environmental resilience. The components of green infrastructure, by improving the resilience of ecosystems, can result in positive benefits to well-being including flood management, water purification, improved air quality, reduced noise pollution and local climate moderation, climate change mitigation and food production. These benefits are important in urban environments where they can facilitate health and well-being related benefits of open space, clean air and improved tranquility, for example, as well as creating a sense of place and improved social cohesion. In addition, green infrastructure has a role in protecting local distinctiveness, providing economic benefits and social and community opportunities.

Taking a proactive approach to Green Infrastructure

6.2.4 Green infrastructure plays a fundamental role in shaping places and our sense of well-being, and is intrinsic to the quality of the spaces we live, work and play in. The planning system must maximise its contribution to the protection and provision of green infrastructure assets and networks as part of meeting society's wider social and economic objectives and the needs of local communities. Taking a proactive and spatial approach, which links to wider activity being taken by local authorities to protect and provide green infrastructure, will help provide clarity around the contribution which the planning system

can make. This means considering how it complements existing and future maintenance and management regimes within urban areas and contributes towards wider land management activities in rural areas to aid nature recovery, and its underpinning natural resources¹¹⁵. This will require effective joint working and collaboration across various sectors and activities, including administrative boundaries. Establishing arrangements to promote collaboration across local authority borders will be necessary, especially where the provision of off-site compensatory land to address biodiversity loss and provide enhancement will have the greatest benefit for biodiversity and resilient ecological networks.

Green Infrastructure Assessments

6.2.5 Planning authorities must, as part of adopting a strategic and proactive approach to green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecosystems resilience, produce up to date inventories and maps of existing green infrastructure and ecological assets and networks. Local authorities may already be undertaking such assessments and/or preparing such information to underpin local authority wide green infrastructure strategies and where this is the case planning authorities should both contribute to this process and use the inventories and mapping to underpin a spatial approach in their development plans. Green Infrastructure Assessments provide key evidence to support the preparation of development plans and where authorities are not already actively undertaking assessments, they should be undertaken as part of development plan preparation. Such Green Infrastructure Assessments should use existing datasets, and the best available information, to develop an integrated map-based evidence resource for biodiversity, ecosystem resilience

and ecosystem service provision. Doing so will facilitate a proactive approach and enable contributions towards the well-being goals to be maximised.

6.2.6 Green Infrastructure Assessments should also draw from the evidence base provided by NRW's Area Statements and Nature Network Maps, Well-being Assessments and locally and regionally collected green infrastructure data and mapping already underpinning local authority approaches to green infrastructure. Its outcomes should be integrated into development plans to ensure the early and co-ordinated consideration of opportunities to inform the development, design and land related strategies of the development plan. The Green Infrastructure Assessment and outcomes should also be given early consideration in development proposals, and inform the design and implementation of projects.

6.2.7 Considering how significant benefits can be delivered through green infrastructure will be a key aim of the assessment and will require collaboration with other stakeholders, including those across administrative boundaries. Planning authorities should develop a multi-functional, coherent and spatial framework of green infrastructure to improve the overall well-being and health of communities and the environment. The assessment should be used to develop a robust approach to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, increasing ecosystem resilience and the multiple benefits obtained from nature, and should identify key strategic opportunities where the protection, retention, restoration, creation and connection of green features and functions would deliver the most significant benefits. Outputs from the green infrastructure assessment must address:

¹¹⁴ Section 6 of the Environment Act 2016.

¹¹⁵ Future Wales Policy 9.



- The identifying of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and historic and cultural features in which green infrastructure plays a part, which are already being safeguarded as part of multi-functioning urban and rural landscapes;
- The nature emergency identifying and demonstrating how a net benefit for biodiversity will be secured and the attributes of ecosystem resilience enhanced, making the links to other land management activity, such as local nature recovery plans, and identifying land which may be required for the protection, retention and restoration and recovery of nature (and in providing a net benefit for biodiversity). This includes recognising the value of designated sites, and natural resources such as peatlands, as part of resilient ecological networks. In urban areas, the protection and provision of green infrastructure should be considered alongside the needs of wider maintenance regimes and any role development may have in making an effective contribution. The assessments may assist in identifying how the impact of INNS and the risk of introducing or spreading INNS will be managed;
- The reduction of pollution, as far as possible, by identifying green infrastructure/nature based solutions which form part of, or complement, wider activity at a catchment scale to address pollution and improve the restoration of riverine and other habitats;
- The climate emergency by ensuring the multi-functional benefits provided by trees and woodlands are identified; for example, by increasing tree canopy cover in urban areas to ensure shading against increased temperatures, and by requiring effective natural flood management and sustainable drainage schemes. Such measures

may also help maintain good air quality and appropriate soundscapes;

- The health and well-being of communities by ensuring they have accessible natural green spaces of various sizes and scales within reasonable walking and cycling distances; and
- How the planning system should secure the implementation and management of green infrastructure, recognising its dynamic nature, over the long term.

6.2.8 The need for ecosystems, habitats and species to adapt to climate change and other pressures should be considered as part of the Green Infrastructure Assessment. This must include identifying ways to avoid or reverse the fragmentation of habitats, and to improve habitat connectivity where appropriate, through the promotion of wildlife corridors, protection of riverine corridors and identifying opportunities for land rehabilitation, reducing pollution, landscape management and habitat restoration, creation and nature recovery. The role of development as part of a spatial approach will be two fold. Planning authorities firstly must ensure that development avoids and then minimises impact on biodiversity and ecosystems and secondly that it provides opportunities for enhancement within areas identified as important for the ability of species to adapt and/or to move to more suitable habitats.

6.2.9 Planning authorities must encourage the appropriate management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna in order to complement and improve the ecological coherence of the National Site Network, formally known as the Natura 2000 network¹¹⁶ well as SSSIs and other statutory and non-statutory designated sites. The features concerned are those

which, because of their linear and continuous structure or their function as 'stepping stones' or 'wildlife corridors', are essential for migration, dispersal or genetic exchange. The protection and creation of networks of statutory and non-statutory sites and of the landscape features which provide links from one habitat to another can make an important contribution to developing resilient ecological networks and securing a net benefit for biodiversity and in doing so improve the quality of the local place and its ability to adapt to climate change.

6.2.10 Green Infrastructure Assessments and their data and mapped outputs must be regularly reviewed to ensure that information on habitats, species and other green features and resources is kept up-to-date. This will ensure development management decisions are informed by appropriate spatial information about the potential effects of development on biodiversity and green infrastructure functions and help identify where different types of green infrastructure benefits/ecosystems services can be secured. Planning authorities should use the best available data to establish and monitor a set of key indicators and incorporate these indicators into both their Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) and, where appropriate, into the appropriate Section 6 Plan and Report. Such indicators will be place-specific and may cover information on key species and habitats, opportunities for the protection, retention, restoration and recovery of nature (to secure a net benefit for biodiversity) and benefits/ecosystem services which contribute to the health and well-being of communities. The monitoring of the success and delivery of net benefits for biodiversity secured through conditions and obligations would usefully feed into this process in addition to any agreed management plan for the site. At the end of each reporting period planning authorities should use this data to indicate whether there has been a net

benefit or loss of biodiversity; whether progress is being made on securing mitigation and enhancement measures; and they should use the trends identified to determine future priorities for planning and decision making, with the aim of furthering the goals of the Section 6 Duty.

Integrating Green Infrastructure and Development



6.2.11 The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

6.2.12 A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15) has been applied.

6.2.13 There are multiple ways of incorporating green infrastructure, depending on the needs and opportunities a site presents, and the green infrastructure assessment should be referred to, as appropriate, in order to ascertain local priorities. Landscaping, green roofs, grass verges, sustainable drainage and gardens are examples of individual design measures that can have wider cumulative benefits, particularly in relation to biodiversity and

¹¹⁶ Section 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made



the resilience of ecosystems as well as in securing the other desired environmental qualities of places. Wider landscape measures, such as the creation of species rich meadows, woodlands and the improvement of linkages between areas of biodiversity value should be considered for larger scale development. In most cases the green infrastructure statement should highlight any baseline data considered and surveys and assessments undertaken, including but not limited to, habitats and species surveys, arboricultural surveys and assessments, sustainable drainage statements, landscape and ecological management plans, open space assessments and green space provision and active travel links.

6.2.14



Development proposals should be informed by the priorities identified in green infrastructure assessments and locally based planning guidance. The Building with Nature standards represent good practice and are an effective prompt for developers to improve the quality of their schemes and demonstrate the sustainable management of natural resources. Using these standards in a way which is proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposed will be a useful way of ensuring appropriate consideration in circumstances where there is an absence of a green infrastructure assessment and planned approach or relevant local or Supplementary Planning Guidance. The standards are underpinned by an accreditation system and whenever possible, accreditation under these standards should be pursued.



Monmouthshire Wellbeing Plan Extract - Objective 3

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



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Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan



Well-being Objective - Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change

Discover - Situation analysis

The Well-being Assessment highlighted the key challenges and issues for Monmouthshire, those that are directly impacted by this objectives are:

- Limited public transport, particularly in rural areas, makes it harder for people to access jobs, services and facilities. This could be exacerbated by rising fuel prices but there are also future opportunities for investment in public transport through the City Deal and advances in technology such as automated vehicles.
- Air pollution causes significant problems for people's health and is a major contributor to premature deaths in Wales. In Monmouthshire, the greatest problems are caused by vehicle emissions and this is particularly apparent in Usk and Chepstow.
- Water pollution is a concern, from a number of sources, including changing agricultural practices
- Reducing levels of physical activity along with dietary changes are leading to growing levels of obesity. This is likely to lead to an increase in long-term conditions associated with it such as type 2 diabetes
- Development, climate change and pollution all present risks to the natural and built environment. These are central to our well-being and need to be protected and preserved for future generations.
- Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding, as well as many other risks, so mitigating climate change and building resilience will be crucial for communities

Define - Response analysis

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. Our ecosystems need to be in good condition and resilient in order to keep us healthy, contribute to the physical and psychological well-being and provide vital contributions to the economy through tourism, agriculture, forestry and more. Because these natural resources are key to so many aspects of well-being, they can't be considered in isolation.

The challenges facing our natural environment are many – climate change, development and changing land management practices are all potential threats to our natural resources and ecosystems. This has resulted in a consequent decline in biodiversity which is a threat to how ecosystems function. Tackling these challenges demands integrated and joined up solutions which are developed and delivered by the public, private and voluntary sectors working together. We need to look at adapting to climate change and well as reducing our contribution to it. The Environment (Wales) Act, with subsequent area plans, works alongside the Well-being of Future Generations Act to address these issues.

The public sector in Wales has huge potential to use its collective purchasing power to support the local economy by specifying and buying food, energy, goods and services locally. Procurement can also have significant global impacts and thought needs to be given to being globally responsible. With Brexit on the horizon, there may be potential for public services to have more flexibility in their purchasing decisions, creating regional jobs and business growth

whilst reducing transport and pollution. Brexit also adds uncertainty for a number of sectors, including agriculture which is an important sector in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire has great potential to generate renewable energy locally. Several renewable energy community interest companies already exist in the county and developing more localised business models for renewable energy and heat generation, storage and distribution will increase energy resilience as well as reducing carbon emissions.

In order for air pollution to be within safe limits for all Monmouthshire residents, transport sources have the potential to be addressed by developing the infrastructure needed for alternative vehicle use, such as electric vehicle charging, which during 2017 has just started being developed in Monmouthshire, and the forthcoming trial in the county of the Rasa hydrogen-powered vehicle. Alongside this, developing public transport solutions is essential to address rural isolation and access to jobs and services.

Promoting active travel (walking and cycling) in both rural and urban areas, and using opportunities offered by the Active Travel Act will help to reduce air pollution but will also have significant health benefits for all ages. Careful planning and design, including using a Green Infrastructure approach, is needed to develop safe, healthy and vibrant communities which have good access to safe and accessible routes and green spaces.

In order to build species and ecosystem resilience in the face of the likely trend of hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters, or other pressures on our natural environment, landscape-scale biodiversity action is needed. Habitats need to be well connected in order to be resilient. Successful partnerships already exist, such as the Wye and Usk Foundation and the Living Levels project, and these partnerships need to be supported and replicated. Acting at a landscape scale also has the potential to provide significant natural flood risk management, and reducing the risk of flooding has economic, social and health benefits.











In all of these areas, working with young people who will be the decision makers of the future is essential. Through schools, youth work and community groups, young people need to understand what sustainable development is, know why it is important, be inspired to make a difference and empowered to become innovative, creative, caring citizens of the future.

Well-being goals contributed to

Prosperous Wales (1)	Resilient Wales (2)	Healthier Wales (3)	More equal Wales (4)	Wales of cohesive communities (5)	Vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language (6)	Globally responsible Wales (7)
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As well as being key to environmental well-being, a Resilient environment is essential to the local economy, to physical and mental health and building Cohesive Communities. To be Globally Responsible, we need to work together to reduce the carbon and pollution we emit by tackling sustainable transport and our energy use and generation. Key to this objective is working with children and young people to help them understand their role in looking after our environment, reducing our environmental impact and recognising the importance of “thinking globally and acting locally”.

Delivering the Solution

The PSB will focus on:	Objective links	Goals	Impact
Improving the resilience of ecosystems by working at a larger scale (landscape) to manage biodiversity and maximise benefits such as natural flood risk management		1, 2, 3	Long
Ensuring design and planning policy supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities that are good for people and the environment.	  	1, 2, 3, 5, 7	Long
Enabling renewable energy schemes, especially community-owned schemes, and developing new solutions including storage, smart energy, heat and local supply.	 	1, 5, 7	Short
Enabling active travel and sustainable transport to improve air quality and give other health benefits.	  	1, 5, 6, 7	Med
Working with children and young people to improve their awareness, understanding and action for sustainable development and make them responsible global citizens of the future.		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Long



Sources of Advice

Sources of Advice

Monmouthshire County Council

Development Management Department
County Hall, Rhadyr,
Usk, NP15 1GA
01633 644831
planning@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Monmouthshire County Council

Monlife
County Hall, Rhadyr,
Usk, NP15 1GA
01633 644850
countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk
rightsofway@monmouthshire.gov.uk
greenInfrastructure@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Monmouthshire County Council Highways Department

County Hall, Rhadyr,
Usk, NP15 1GA
01633 644644
highways@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority

Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way Brecon,
Powys, LD3 7HP
01874 624437
strategy@beacons-npa.gov.uk
Management Plan (2023-2028) available from: <https://future.bannau.wales/introducing-the-management-plan/>

Wye Valley National Landscape AONB Unit

Hadnock Road,
Monmouth, NP25 3NG
01600 713977
aonb.officer@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk
Management Plan (2021-2026) available from: <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wye-Valley-AONB-Management-Plan-2021-26-finalised.pdf>

Natural Resources Wales

Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road,
Cardiff, CF24 0TP
0300 065 3000
enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Cadw

Welsh Government, Ty Afon,
Coed Bedwas Road, Caerphilly, CF83 8WT
0300 0256000
Cadw@gov.wales

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Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan Objectives

Objectives

Objective 1: Embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

- Corporate Policy, Well-being Policy and Planning, Strategic Plans e.g. RLDLP, Consents, Operational decisions,

Objective 2: Provide nature-based opportunities to raise awareness, support health and well-being and encourage action for nature

- Environmental Education, Health & Wellbeing activities in nature, providing interpretation and guidance, supporting local groups and citizens to act for nature.

Objective 3: Undertake land management for biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience

- Management of Council estate for nature recovery.

Objective 4: Influence land management to improve ecosystem resilience

- Supporting other landowners and stakeholders to make positive changes e.g. Regenerative Farming and Natural Flood Management.

Objective 5: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

- Addressing drivers through project and procedure e.g. Delivering net benefit through Development Management, Invasive non-native species control, impacts of lighting.

Objective 6: Support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery

- Collaboration, co-design and co-production through Catchment Partnerships, landscape partnerships, project partnerships.

Objective 7: Use improved evidence, understanding and monitoring to inform action

- Nature Networks, undertaking and encouraging others to undertake monitoring and biological recording.

Objective 8: Monitor the effectiveness of the plan and review

- Undertake statutory reporting and assess the need to update the plan.

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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

April 2024

Volume 2 **Delivery Plan**



Monmouth

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 Delivery Framework
- 3 Action Plans



1

Introduction



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy

1.1.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out Monmouthshire County Council's approach to enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and improving health and wellbeing outcomes in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

1.1.2 The Strategy was prepared by CBA on behalf of the Council.

Volume 1 – Strategic Framework

1.1.3 Volume 1 of the Strategy sets out the Council's strategic framework for GI provision in Monmouthshire. It identifies key priorities and strategic opportunities where the restoration, maintenance, creation or connection of green features and functions would deliver the most significant benefits, both on a county-wide basis and for key settlements where growth is planned in the adopted Local Development Plan (2011-2021).

1.1.4 An Executive Summary of the Green Infrastructure Strategy is also set out in a separate document.

Volume 2 – Delivery Plan (this document)

1.1.5 Volume 2 of the Strategy provides the Council's delivery plan for GI in Monmouthshire. Provided as a separate document, the Delivery Plan includes prioritised action plans for delivery of strategic/landscape-scale GI projects, and local GI projects to support development at the key growth locations and rural secondary settlements. The action plans are designed to support funding bids by the Council and its delivery partners.

GIS Database of GI Assets

1.1.6 A comprehensive and user-friendly GIS Database of GI assets and related information is held by the Council, which provides a tool for informing land use planning and land management decision-making with regards to GI.

1.1.7 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be kept under review by the Council and updated as necessary to have regard to changing circumstances.



2

Delivery Framework



2.0 DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

2.1 Approach

2.1.1 The framework for delivery of the GI Strategy is outlined below broadly based around the “ways of working” approach that public bodies are required to adopt by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Integrated and Joined Up Approach

2.1.2 The GI Strategy promotes an integrated and joined up approach to delivering GI that takes into account the needs of Monmouthshire’s communities, environment and economy. An important overarching principle underpinning the Strategy is the need to recognise the multi-functionality of GI assets and to maximise the benefits different assets can deliver through an integrated approach. For example, greenspaces can be used for sustainable food production, contribute to flood management and provide access to nature for informal recreation. It is essential that the inter-relationship and connections between the individual GI projects outlined in this Delivery Plan are considered in the round to ensure that opportunities for shared outcomes and mutual benefits are maximised.

Long-Term Thinking and Prevention

2.1.3 The GI Strategy promotes long-term thinking by aiming to balance current and long-term GI needs for Monmouthshire. It also encourages taking action now to prevent problems in the future through targeted investment in the delivery of new and enhanced GI where it is most needed. This is reflected in the range and nature of the GI projects included in the Action Plan.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Involvement

2.1.4 As reflected in the Action Plan, the GI Strategy promotes a collaborative approach to working with a range of stakeholders and partners to help meet its aims and objectives. The benefits of collaboration by public bodies in GI delivery are being championed by the Gwent Green Grid partnership (**Box 2.1**).

2.1.5 Importantly, the GI Strategy also seeks to directly involve and engage local communities in the delivery of the GI projects included in the Action Plan.

2.1.6 The benefits of a collaborative partnership approach to delivery of GI projects are illustrated by the Living Levels Landscape Partnership in the Gwent Levels (see **Box 2.2**).

BOX 2.1 The Gwent Green Grid Partnership

The Partnership is a collaboration of the five local authorities of Gwent, (Monmouthshire County Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council) working with Natural Resources Wales and other partners and stakeholders, and has been active since 2020.

The Gwent Green Grid Partnership aims to bring together existing partnerships/projects to achieve greater strategic and local impact by providing a framework for connecting other initiatives and strategies; pooling funding; sharing resources and learning around ecosystem resilience, healthy living and climate adaptation; making landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements; and involving partners on a wider footprint.

<https://www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/green-infrastructure/gwent-green-grid-partnership/>



BOX 2.2 The Living Levels Landscape Partnership

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership has come together to deliver a programme of work which will promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the historic landscape of the Gwent Levels.

The Scheme covers an area of 225 km² extending from Cardiff and the River Rhymney in the west to Chepstow on the River Wye in Monmouthshire to the east.

The Partnership comprises the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council, Cardiff City Council, Cardiff Story Museum, Sustrans, The National Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Buglife.

Involving a work programme of 24 inter-related projects, the Scheme seeks to work with landowners, farmers and the local community to conserve and restore the important natural heritage features of the area, develop a far greater appreciation of the value of the landscape and to inspire people to learn about and participate in the heritage of the Gwent Levels. A £2.5 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund is helping to lever in further funding and deliver a £4 million scheme between 2018 and 2021.

The Partnership is leading on the delivery of the Gwent Levels GI Strategy, which aims to protect and enhance the area's GI assets, address the challenges of climate change and help underpin economic stability and growth that meets the needs of local communities and businesses.

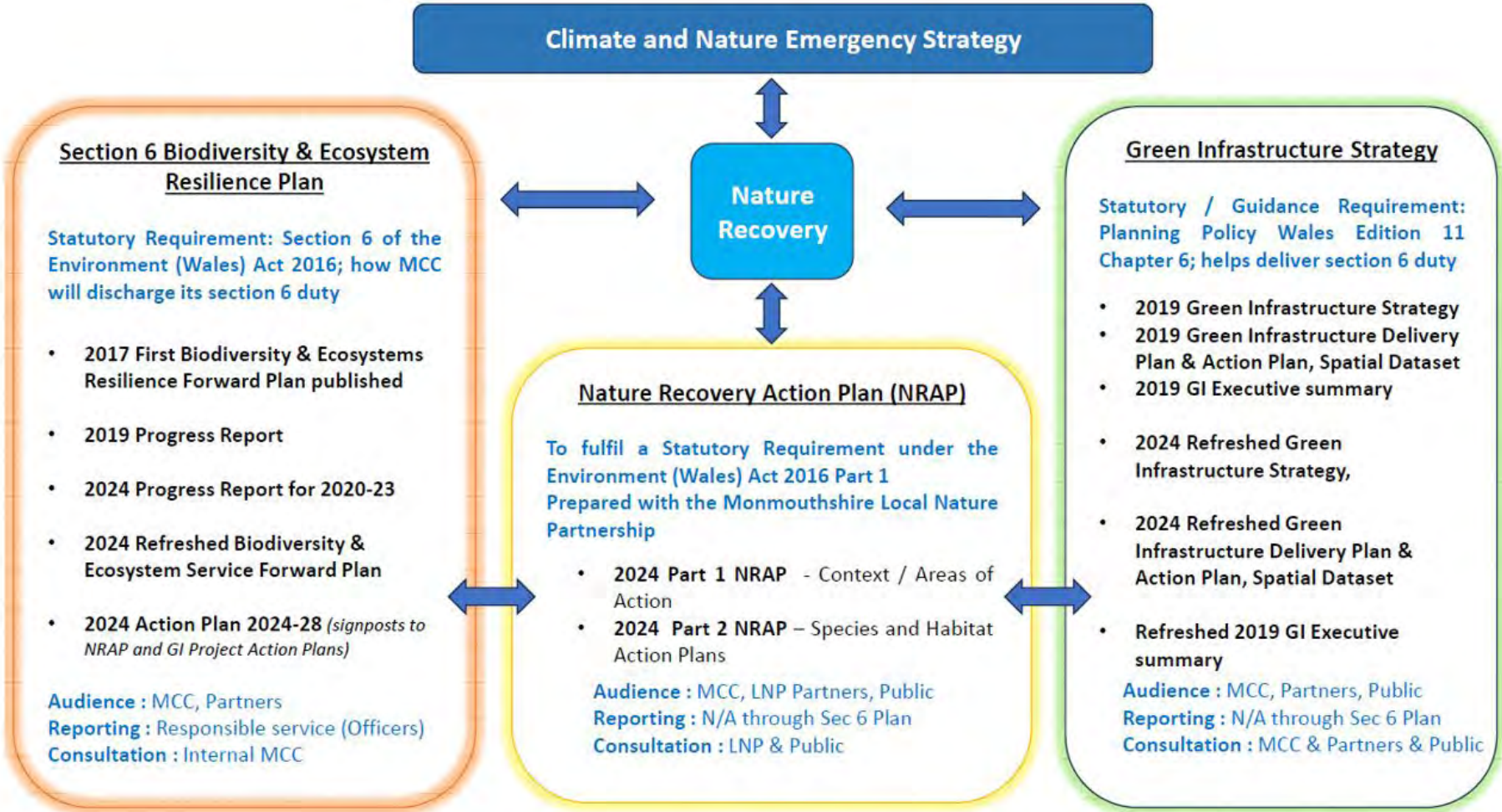
www.livinglevels.org.uk

**2.2 Delivery Principles**

2.2.1 To maximise the successful implementation of the GI Strategy, the Council will work with its partners to:

- Champion the benefits of GI across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Influence and enable delivery of GI.
- Provide advocacy to market and promote GI.
- Identify opportunities for funding GI projects.
- Establish partnerships for pooling funding, coordinating delivery and long-term management of specific GI projects.
- Liaise with partners in neighbouring areas to co-ordinate cross-boundary delivery of GI projects at the regional scale.
- Monitor progress in delivery of the Action Plan and evaluate project impact in relation to the GI Strategy's objectives.
- Promote adoption of best practice with regards to implementation and long-term maintenance of GI.
- Provide assistance/advice on integration of the GI Strategy into other plans, policies and programmes.
- As the local planning authority, seek to promote best practice by promoting principles for embedding GI into development outlined in the adopted Green Infrastructure SPG.
- As the local planning authority, utilise the step-wise approach advocated by Planning Policy Wales 12, guiding decision makers in securing a net benefit for biodiversity.

2.2.2 The GI Strategy is part of Monmouthshire County Council's 3 part delivery plan for nature recovery:



2.3 Integrating Green Infrastructure and Development

2.3.1 In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (Section 6.2), opportunities to enhance the quality of the built environment by integrating GI into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design should be considered.

2.3.2 Planning Policy Wales requires that Building with Nature Standards should be applied to development as a GI design quality checklist for place-making and place-keeping, in a way which is proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposed. The Building with Nature Standards represent a default benchmark for ensuring appropriate consideration of GI, and whenever possible accreditation under these standards should be pursued.

2.3.3 Planning Policy Wales also requires applicants to submit a Green Infrastructure Statement with all planning applications, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development. Green Infrastructure Statements should demonstrate how well-being, nature and climate priorities identified in the Monmouthshire GI Strategy have been addressed in the development proposal.

2.3.4 The Green Infrastructure Statement should provide evidence that the step-wise approach advocated by Planning Policy Wales has been followed, demonstrating that a scheme of enhancements will be provided to ensure a net benefit for biodiversity.

2.3.5 As described in Planning Policy Wales, the step-wise approach aims to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Enhancement must be secured by delivering a biodiversity benefit primarily on site or immediately adjacent to the site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact (in future this may include purchasing biodiversity credits).

2.4 Potential Funding Streams

2.4.1 The Council will continue to be proactive in seeking funding opportunities for delivery of GI in line with the objectives and priorities set out in this GI Strategy. Potential funding streams that may support delivery of GI projects include:

- **Welsh Government:** such as that allocated in the Infrastructure Investment Strategy, and Transforming Towns funding can provide support for delivery of cross-sector, collaborative GI projects.
- **UK Funding:** such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, part of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda, which includes funding to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.
- **Developer contributions:** can provide funding for delivery of GI projects secured in line with the Council's LDP policy.
- **Landfill Disposal Tax Communities Scheme:** distributes grants to community-based environmental projects to help mitigate effects of landfill on local communities.
- **Community grants:** community benefit schemes, investment programmes and small-scale grants can provide funding for community-based environmental projects in support of GI objectives.
- **Public/private sector funding:** can play a key role in securing the future of community green space and other GI assets as part of meeting corporate social responsibility objectives including trust funds.
- **National Lottery funding:** Also has a key role to play in providing funding for delivery of GI projects, such as the National Lottery Heritage Nature Networks Fund in Wales.

2.5 Green Infrastructure Management and Maintenance

2.5.1 Monmouthshire County Council will support the long-term management and appropriate maintenance of GI assets on land within its ownership, and is committed to sharing good practice in this regard.

2.5.2 The Council will also encourage other landowners and land managers of GI assets on public or private land to put in place appropriate management and maintenance practices.

2.5.3 Monmouthshire is a partner in the Nature isn't Neat project, which is establishing joined-up green space management to create wildflower-rich pollinator habitats across Gwent local authority areas as part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership. This approach encourages change in the way grassland is managed - on our verges, open spaces and parks - to benefit nature. The project also provides [training and resources](#) to support project implementation.

2.5.4 Landowners and land managers are encouraged to follow the Council's Guidance Note on Green Infrastructure Management Plans.

2.5.5 Landowners and land managers of public land are also encouraged to support the delivery of the GI Action Plan for Pollinators in South East Wales.

2.5.6 An example of best practice in preparing Green Infrastructure Management Plans is illustrated by the case study in **Box 2.3**.

BOX 2.3 Caldicot Country Park Green Infrastructure Management Plan: Case Study

Caldicot Country Park is one of a number of countryside sites owned and managed by Monmouthshire County Council. In 2017, the Council developed a long-term green infrastructure management plan for the Country Park, which included a public consultation to encourage the community to help plan and shape the future of the park. The aim of the plan is to safeguard the park's connected green spaces, while reflecting its heritage and natural environment to enhance the quality of life and community identity.

2.6 Updating the Evidence Base

2.6.1 In order to ensure a robust evidence base in respect of the provision, quality/condition and accessibility/connectivity of Monmouthshire's different types of GI assets to inform the Local Development Plan revision process, the following key studies (and their underlying datasets) will be updated/superseded:

- Open Space Study
- Ecological Connectivity Assessment - to be superseded by the Nature Networks Ecological Opportunity Mapping for Gwent

2.7 Monitoring Delivery

2.7.1 The Council will monitor the outcomes of GI delivery against the strategic objectives and priorities identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The approach to monitoring will be based on the following outline monitoring framework.

Strategic GI Objectives	Strategic GI Priorities	Indicators to be Monitored	Outputs to be Measured
1: Improve Health & Wellbeing	See Vol 1 - para 3.3.7	Increase/decrease in people being physically active using GI	Numbers of people using green spaces and routes Length of green routes improved Length of new green routes created
		Increase/decrease in people engaging with nature	Volunteers involved in GI project delivery/stewardship People benefitting from GI projects
2: Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience	See Vol 1 - para 3.3.12	Increase/decrease of species and habitats	Numbers of priority species/area of priority habitats Condition of designated habitats Number of sites with management plans
		Delivery of net benefits for biodiversity through development	Number of net benefits for biodiversity secured through planning conditions/obligations
3: Support Climate and Nature Resilience	See Vol 1 - para 3.3.21	Increase in use of nature-based solutions	Number of nature-based solutions (e.g. natural flood management schemes, green roofs, SuDS, etc.)
4: Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness	See Vol 1 - para 3.3.17	Strengthening/weakening of distinctive landscape characteristics	Length/area of key landscape features (e.g. field boundaries, woodland, water bodies. etc)
5: Support Sustainable Economic Development	See Vol 1 - para 3.3.26	Increase/decrease in green jobs	Numbers of jobs created in GI management and maintenance

3

Action Plans



3.0 ACTION PLANS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The original Action Plan developed in support of the 2019 Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure Strategy has been updated to reflect progress in delivery of GI projects and to include new GI projects for delivery in the future.

3.1.2 Informed by the needs and opportunities for strengthening Monmouthshire's Strategic GI Network identified in Volume 1, Section 3.4/ Appendix D3, the Action Plans set out existing and potential strategic/ landscape-scale GI projects that extend across one or more of the GI Zones.

3.1.3 The Action Plans also set out existing and potential local GI projects focussed around the key growth locations and rural secondary settlements in the adopted LDP, which were identified from the assessment of local needs and opportunities for GI provision in Volume 1, Section 4.0.

3.1.4 The projects have been selected based on their potential to make a contribution to the GI Strategy's objectives and associated priorities for guiding the planning, management and delivery of GI in Monmouthshire (see Volume 1, Section 3.3). The projects were confirmed by the Council in consultation with stakeholders.

3.1.5 The Council will review the Action Plans and update them as necessary to reflect progress or changing circumstances.

3.2 Action Plans User Guide

3.2.1 The Action Plans are available as an updateable Excel Database held by MCC. Contact Colette Bosley (01633 644852/colettebosley@monmouthshire.gov.uk) to request access to the Action Plans database.

3.2.2 The database is structured as follows:

Ref No – the unique reference number for the project.

Project Name – existing project name or suggested name for a potential project.

Project Scope – summary of the project's aims, location or spatial extent.

Status:

- Concept/Aspirational Stage
- Feasibility Stage
- Business Case Established and Ready for Funding
- Existing/Funded

Strategic/Landscape-Scale or Local/Place-Specific GI Project

GI Zone Name:

- A: Gwent Levels
- B: Wye Valley & Wentwood
- C: Central Monmouthshire – South
- D: Central Monmouthshire – North
- E: Bannau Brycheiniog & Black Mountains
- F: Eastern South Wales Valleys
- Multiple Zones

Settlement Name:

- Abergavenny & Llanfoist
- Monmouth
- Chepstow
- Severnside Settlements: Magor & Undy
- Severnside Settlements: Rogiet
- Severnside Settlements: Caldicot
- Severnside Settlements: Portskewett & Sudbrook
- Severnside Settlements: Caerwent
- Usk
- Raglan
- Penperlleni

Contribution to GI Strategy Objectives:

- 1: Improve Health & Wellbeing
- 2: Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience
- 3: Support Climate and Nature Resilience
- 4: Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness
- 5: Support Sustainable Economic Development

Contribution to National Well-being Goals:

- 1: A Prosperous Wales
- 2: A Resilient Wales
- 3: A Healthier Wales
- 4: A More Equal Wales
- 5: A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- 6: A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language
- 7: A Globally Responsive Wales

Contribution to Monmouthshire Well-being Objectives:

- 1: Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life
- 2: Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change
- 3: Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change
- 4: Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county

Contribution to Monmouthshire Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Plan Objectives:

- 1: Embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels
- 2: Provide environmental education to raise awareness and encourage action
- 3: Undertake land management for biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience
- 4: Influence land management to improve ecosystem resilience
- 5: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats
- 6: Support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery
- 7: Monitor the effectiveness of the plan and review

Priority – the indicative timescale for project delivery:

- Short-term (1 year)
- Medium-term (2-5 years)
- Longer-term (5+ years)

Indicative Cost:

- Low: <£10k
- Medium: £10k-£100k
- High: £100k-£1M
- Major: >£1M

Delivery Lead

Delivery Partners

Outcomes/Indicators – for monitoring progress in delivery of action/evaluating project impact.

Abbreviations

- Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council (BCBC)
- Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA)
- Blaenavon WHS Partnership (BWHSP)
- Blaenavon World Heritage Environment Group (BWHEG)
- Cadw (Welsh Government Heritage Service) (Cadw)
- Canal & River Trust (CRT)
- Cardiff City Council (CCC)
- Dŵr Cymru (DC)
- Gwent Wildlife Trust (GWT)
- Living Levels Landscape Partnership (LLLLP)
- Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust (MBACT)
- Monmouthshire County Council (MCC)
- Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA)
- Natural England (NE)
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- Newport City Council (NCC)

- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC)
- Visit Wales (VW)
- Welsh Government (WG)
- Wye Valley AONB Unit
- Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF)

Search Function

3.2.3 The Excel Database includes a search function; using the drop down grey filter arrows in the column headings, the projects can be searched by the following:

- Status
- Strategic/Landscape-Scale or Local/Place-Specific GI Project
- GI Zone Name
- Settlement Name
- GI Strategy Objective
- National Well-being Goals
- Monmouthshire Well-being Objective
- Monmouthshire Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience Plan Objective
- Priority
- Indicative Cost
- Delivery Lead

3.2.4 The Excel Database also includes a function to find specific text (e.g. a specific project title).

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Nature Recovery Action Plan and GI Strategy Public Consultation

1. Consultation Communication Plan

The Local NRAP and Green Infrastructure Strategy public consultation was launched at Usk County Show on 14th September 2024 and ran for six weeks. A shorter questionnaire was conducted at Usk Show on the day of the launch. The consultation had originally been planned for May/June 2024 but was delayed due to the announcement of the general election. Following lifting of restrictions around the pre-election period, many large consultations were launched, including the Replacement Local Development Plan Deposit. Engagement with the consultation was low potentially due to consultation fatigue during 2024.

Table 1: Timetable of Events

Date	Location	Methodology
14 th September 2024	Usk County Show	Launch public consultation (including asking visitors to stall at show)
15 th September 2024	Online	Press release issued advertising consultation, press release promoted on social media and via mailing lists
7 th October 2024	Libraries and Hubs*	Consultation advertised on information boards and posters in libraries for green libraries week. Hard copies made available.
31 st October 2024		Consultation closed

*Caldicot, Chepstow, Abergavenny, Monmouth, Gilwern and Magor



Picture 1: Display at Usk Show, similar boards were used at libraries



Picture 2: Poster for libraries and hubs

The press release was reported on by at least three sources:

- Monmouthshire Beacon [Shape the future of our environment in Monmouthshire](#)
- South Wales Argus [Council launches consultation to shape the future of environment](#)

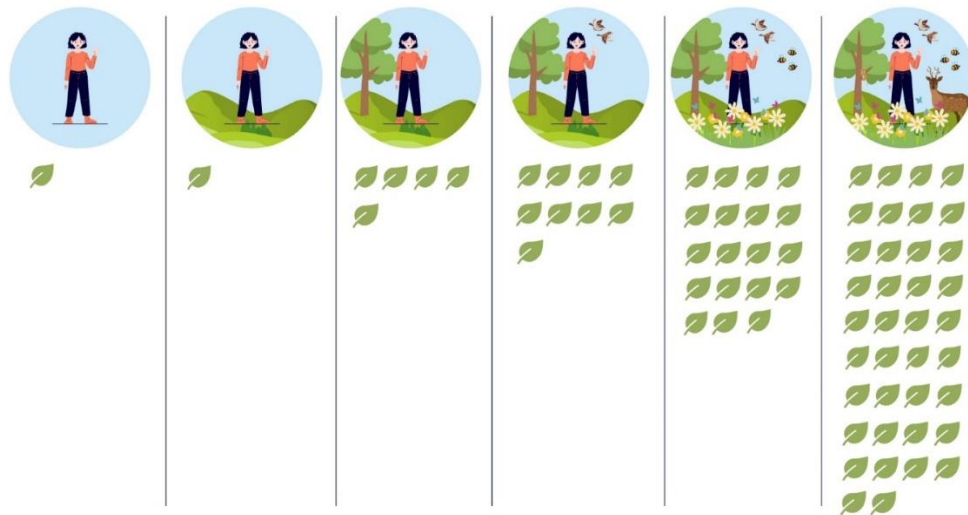
- Green Economy Wales [Consultation Launched to Shape the Future of Monmouthshire's Environment](#)

Table 2: Number of respondents

Part of Questionnaire	Number of Respondents
Short Usk Show Questionnaire	42
Monmouthshire's Natural Heritage	53 (including four hard copy responses)
Monmouthshire Local NRAP	17
MCC Green Infrastructure Strategy	20

2. Views on Monmouthshire's Natural Heritage

The consultation began with questions to gauge awareness and feelings on climate and nature emergency issues, and views on Monmouthshire's natural heritage. The questionnaire from Usk show included some of the same questions, and a pictorial question on how "connected" one felt to nature. The stamps collected are summarised on Picture 3 below



Picture 3: Summary of responses to "How connected do you feel to nature"

Respondents were asked what they valued most about the natural environment and landscape of Monmouthshire. The most popular responses were access to countryside and greenspaces in towns, some respondents specifically mentioned walking, rights of way or cycling access. Rivers and streams were equally as popular. The beauty or scenery of Monmouthshire and diverse wildlife were also mentioned.



Region	Dark Blue (%)	Teal (%)	Green (%)	Olive (%)	Orange (%)
Rivers	62	13	17	5	3
Woodland	21	47	21	11	0
Grassland	13	22	37	18	10
Coastal	0	12	13	47	28
Urban	4	6	11	19	60

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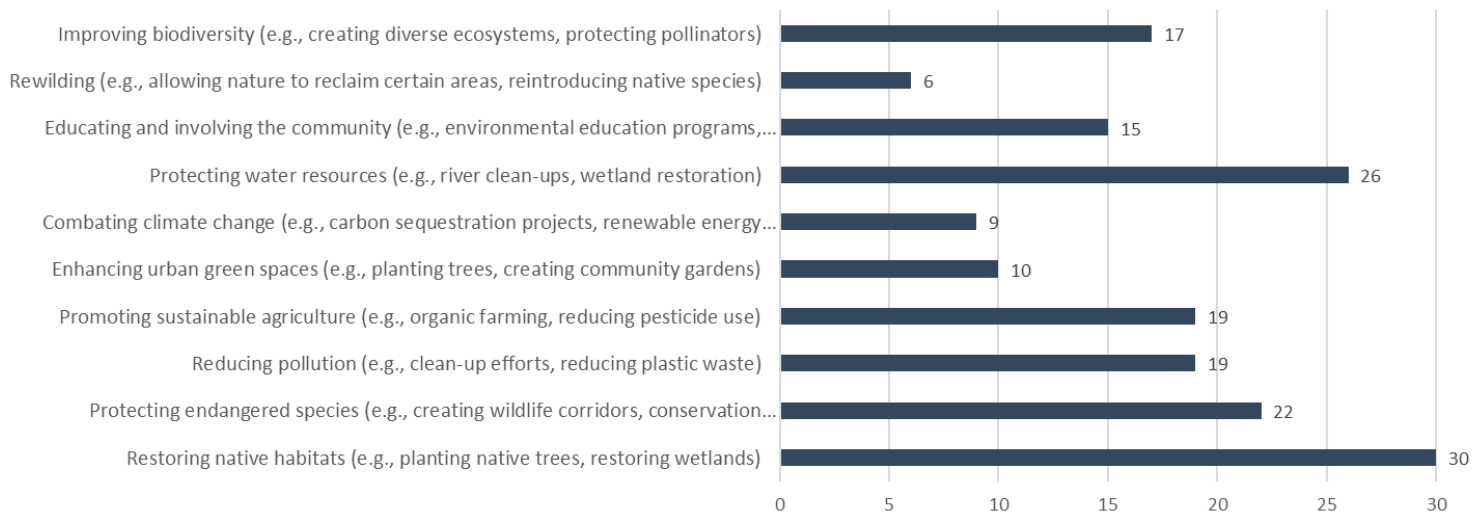


Chart 2: Nature Recovery Actions

3. Monmouthshire Local NRAP

Work began on the Monmouthshire Local NRAP in 2022, when members of the Monmouthshire and Newport Local Nature Partnership (as it was then) were asked to feedback on what habitats and species they considered priorities for Monmouthshire and how the local NRAP should look. The Monmouthshire and Newport LNP separated into two partnerships in 2023, and the first draft of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP was sent to Monmouthshire members in January 2024. Members fed back to the LNP coordinator, and the changes were incorporated into final draft.

Public consultation feedback on the Monmouthshire Local NRAP was positive. Most were enthusiastic about the aims and objectives of the plan supported the content. A few felt it was too complicated, which we intend to address. We have summarised the recommendations made by respondents, and how we are going to address this below.

Table 3: Recommendations and Response

Recommendation	Response
Practical solutions	Part 1 of the NRAP is the introduction setting out the strategy. Parts 2 and 3 will provide habitat and species action plans which will include practical solutions
Firmer engagement strategy	The General Action Plan (Section 4) includes engagement actions suitable for all LNP members to take. Following initial review with LNP members it was decided the make the GAP more specific to LNP members and remove some tasks which were specific to the LNP coordinator, such as producing a comms plan and engagement strategy. These are now in the work programme for the LNP coordinator.
Funding Options	Funding programmes are dynamic, so including within a static document is not practical. We already highlight funding options as they become available to members on the LNP mailing list. We will develop our website to include a section of funding options.
More commentary from national and local wildlife groups	We have consulted with LNP members, which include representatives from national and local wildlife groups, and the feedback received was incorporated into the draft. The LNP coordinator will continue to expand LNP engagement and increase member input into the Local NRAP.

Easy read section	We will develop an easy read summary of the Local NRAP which will be presented as a webpage
Community Action Plan	We will develop a list of community actions that residents can undertake to make a difference. This will be presented as a webpage, which can be easily updated to ensure that links remain live and usable.
Protect green areas from development	These recommendations are not within the scope of the LNP to deliver nor appropriate for the Local NRAP to include. National Planning Policy, the Replacement Local Development Plan and Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Guidance are more appropriate mechanisms.
Hold landowners accountable for damage	
Swift bricks on new houses	

Outcome of the Local NRAP Consultation

- No changes to the Local NRAP Part 1 Strategy document are proposed
- We will create an easy-read summary of the Local NRAP to be published alongside the strategy
- We will create a Community Action Plan to identify actions that can be taken by individuals
- We will develop our web presence to present these documents online, and include signposting towards funding sources

4. MCC Green Infrastructure Strategy

The MCC Green Infrastructure Strategy was first published in March 2019. A co-production of the 2019 version was undertaken including workshops with Town and Community Councils and other local stakeholders. The updated version is a refresh of the 2017 Strategy to consider changes in national and local policies.

Feedback on the refreshed Green Infrastructure Strategy was positive; the majority stated it increased their knowledge of green infrastructure services and benefits. The majority supported the aims and objectives of the strategy. Concerns raised are summarised in Table 5:

Table 5: Concerns and Response

Concern	Response
Not enough projects to deliver in a timely manner	A GI Strategy Projects database is being developed was intended to be informed by the public consultation and form a dynamic document which lists current and potential projects.
Move on from consultation to delivery	The current GI Strategy is used to inform delivery of projects by the GI Team and other relevant teams. The refreshed GI strategy will continue to inform the delivery and the emerging GI Strategy Projects database.
Executive summary needed	The document does have an executive summary that is available as a separate document, the link was included as part of the consultation.

Respondents were asked what they were hoping to see in the GI Strategy which wasn't included. The responses included are summarised in Table 6:

Table 6:

Matter Raised	Response
Protected areas around villages and towns to prevent further development	The GI strategy works alongside the Replacement Development Plan to ensure that development is sustainable.
Maintenance of reens, coastal path and footpaths and cutting back/down weeds especially on footpaths	The GI Strategy promotes access to natural greenspaces but does not have a direct role in maintenance of these routes. Maintenance of reens is the responsibility of landowners and/or the Internal Drainage District. The Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) details procedures relating to maintenance of the wales coast path and footpaths.
More emphasis on green cycling and walking routes	The GI Strategy promotes access and walking and cycling routes and is interconnected with other strategies relating to transport and the Active Travel Network Mapping which are the places for emphasis on cycling and walking specifically.
Policy changes within MCC to implement use of green infrastructure by staff to raise awareness and normalise protection of nature and active travel	The GI strategy, alongside the Nature Recovery Action Plan, and the Local Transport Strategy promote nature and active travel this is also reflected in the current LDP and emerging deposit RLDP. The development of the latter must deliver net benefit for biodiversity in line with our S6 act commitments.
Wider stakeholder base to include biodiversity and environment organisations	The stakeholder base of the GI Strategy is very broad as it promotes partnership working to deliver and improve GI with organisations such as environmental NGO's (such as GWT) statutory bodies (such as NRW), including the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership, community groups and town and community councils.
More clarity on proposals	A GI Strategy Projects database is being developed which was intended to be informed by the public consultation and form a dynamic document which lists current and potential projects.
Reduce invasion of green spaces by only repurposing empty buildings for housing	The GI strategy works alongside the Replacement Development Plan to ensure that development is sustainable a specific chapter on Green Infrastructure and policy is included in the deposit RLDP.

Potential Green Infrastructure projects that respondents would like to see include:

- More pollinator friendly projects
- Cycle / walking track from Usk to Little Mill

- Safer cycle/walking network around Monmouthshire
- Defined actions that deliver defined outcomes
- Revamped bridge over the Monnow
- Green pathways in Usk
- Rainwater storage

The GI strategy, together with the Placemaking Plans, Nature Recovery Action Plan, Replacement Local Development Plan, Countryside Access Improvement Plan, Local Transport Strategy, provide opportunities for these projects. The Ciria Sustainable Drainage Systems Manual provides technical standards and best practice around rainwater storage.

Outcome of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Consultation

- No changes to the GI Strategy Volume 1 or 2 are proposed
- An executive summary is available
- We will expand our Green Infrastructure projects pages on the website to publicise projects.

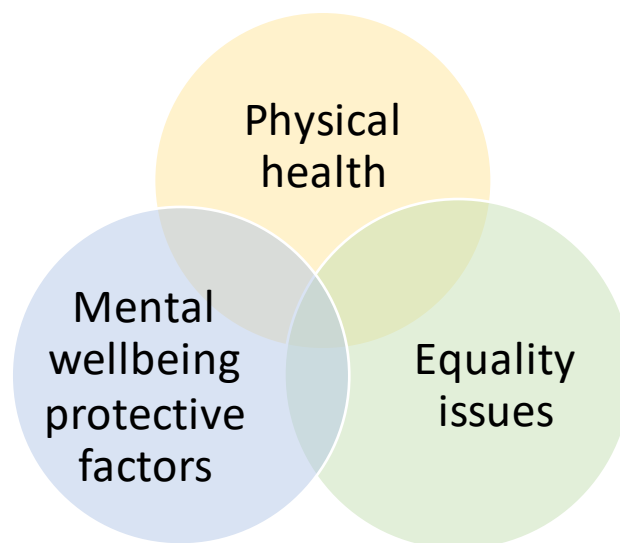
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Appendix 6

Report on Integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA) and Green Infrastructure Prioritisation

What is an Integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA)?

The concept of an Integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA) has gained prominence in recent years as a comprehensive approach to evaluating the potential health impacts of policies, programmes, and projects. It's a way at looking at all projects, in their planning phase, to make sure that our Green Infrastructure (GI) projects and work have the greatest benefit/impact on the health and mental wellbeing of the residents of Monmouthshire and includes action for the nature and climate emergencies our communities are facing.



It provides a systematic process that combines various methodologies to assess the potential health effects of a proposed policy, programme, or project on a population. The assessment involves the collection and analysis of data, stakeholder engagement, and the consideration of health equity to ensure that the impacts on different population groups are thoroughly examined. IHIA places a strong emphasis on health equity, ensuring that the impacts on vulnerable and marginalised populations are considered. This helps to address disparities and promote fairness in health outcomes. When planning a GI project we need to consider how it will:

Consider Health Inequalities: 'The "hardest to reach" are often the ones we need to reach most.' Those groups of people experiencing the greatest health inequalities are the ones most likely to benefit from access to the natural environment. Therefore, increasing access for all, but with a focus on how to increase engagement for at risk groups, is an important consideration. These include children and young people, Socio-economic status (SES), older people, BAME communities, people with physical and mental health long-term health conditions, people with disabilities.

Increase access to green space and the natural environment: Access to green space and nature has been strongly linked good physical and mental health. Therefore, increasing opportunities

for people to engage with nature and the natural environment is an important health consideration.

Increase social connection: Green space can support positive health and wellbeing outcomes through facilitating social interactions which promote social cohesion. The ability of our GI projects to enable people to come together in nature is likely to have a positive impact on social connections. **Support Volunteering:** Volunteering is an important element in sustaining the projects and green space improvements. It is associated with a sense of achievement, social connectedness and improved eudemonic wellbeing and therefore likely to be an important contributor the wellbeing of the volunteer themselves.

Facilitate healthy lifestyles through behaviour change: The pandemic lockdowns increased awareness about access to green spaces. However, since then the usage has almost dropped back to pre-pandemic levels. Hence, there's a need to understand sustainable behaviour change and appropriate promotion to encourage continued access and use of green spaces.

Using iHIA to Prioritise Green Infrastructure Delivery

We want to make sure that our GI work achieves the most benefit for our communities' health and mental wellbeing and to address nature and climate emergencies. So, we need to make sure our work is targeted, and its impacts are measured. Particular population characteristics can make people more vulnerable to lower levels of wellbeing. Consideration of these groups will help address health inequalities.

A tool for assessing and measuring the impact of GI projects on populations groups has been developed. A toolkit / checklist is used in the planning stage of a project to assess the impact - both positive and negative- of the activity on populations groups. The checklist process takes 15-30 minutes and is best undertaken with colleagues to generate discussion and consideration of the potential impacts of the proposed project.



For more information about the iHIA and the use of the toolkit, please contact Helenfairbank@monmouthshire.gov.uk

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