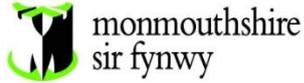


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Tuesday, 3 February 2026

Dear Councillor

## CABINET

You are requested to attend a **Cabinet** meeting to be held at **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** on **Wednesday, 11th February, 2026**, at **5.00 pm**.

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 27th January 2026 1 - 2
4. 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET - FINANCIAL UPDATE 3 - 64  
Division/Wards Affected: All  
Purpose: To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year.  
Author: Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance (Deputy Section 151 officer)  
Contact Details: [jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk)
5. MONMOUTHSHIRE'S CULTURAL STRATEGY 2026-2036 65 - 212  
Division/Wards Affected: All  
Purpose: To present the Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan and invites Cabinet to approve the strategy and its adoption.  
Authors: Tracey Thomas, Head of Culture, Community Learning and Events  
Rachael Rogers, Heritage, Culture and Arts Strategic Manager  
Contact Details: [traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk);  
[Rachaelrogers@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:Rachaelrogers@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

6. DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION PROVISION 213 - 258

Division/Wards Affected: Monmouth

Purpose: To provide details and seek approval for the acquisition and refurbishment of a property in Monmouth for the purpose of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people (aged 16 plus), using existing borrowing headroom.

Approval is sought based on a Business Case that is attached as Appendix 1.

Author: Jane Rodgers, Strategic Director Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

Contact Details: [janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

7. 2026/27 PLACEMAKING DELIVERY 259 - 266

Division/Wards Affected: Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor with Undy, Monmouth, Usk

Purpose: This report sets out the recommendations of the local placemaking partnership groups in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor with Undy, Monmouth and Usk for project delivery in 2026/27 using Welsh Government Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride in Place Impact Fund allocations and seeks Cabinet's agreement to those recommendations.

Author: Daniel Fordham, Regeneration Manager

Contact Details: [danielfordham@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:danielfordham@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely,

**Paul Matthews**  
**Chief Executive**

### CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p><b>Leader</b> 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><b>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader</b> 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><b>Cabinet Member for Resources</b> 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
Laura Wright	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Education</b> Lead Officers – Will McLean, Deb Hill-Howells</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs/inclusion Post 16 and adult education School standards and improvement</p>	Grofield

	<p>Community learning Sustainable communities for learning Programme Youth service School transport</p>	
Ian Chandler	<p><b>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services</b> Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children’s services Fostering &amp; 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><b>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment</b> Lead Officers – Debra Hill-Howells, Craig O’Connor,</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><b>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</b> Lead Officers – Matthew Gatehouse, Paul Matthews, Jane Rodgers, 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	<b>Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing &amp; Tourism</b> Lead Officers – Craig O'Connor, Jane Rodgers  Local Food production and consumption, including agroforestry and local horticulture Homelessness, Temporary accommodation, private sector housing, (empty homes leasing schemes, home improvement loans, disabled facilities grants and adaptive technology), Allocation of social housing Broadband connectivity Active Travel Countryside Access and Rights of Way Tourism Development and Cultural Services	Cantref
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## Public Information

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Recordings of the meeting will be stored in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. Archived webcasts or parts of webcasts shall only be removed from the Council's website if the Monitoring Officer considers that it is necessary because all or part of the content of the webcast is or is likely to be in breach of any statutory provision or common law doctrine, for example Data Protection and Human Rights legislation or provisions relating to confidential or exempt information.

## 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.



## *Monmouthshire Scrutiny*

### **Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

#### **Report Item 3: School Exclusions Update**

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues:

Members raised extensive questions about the rising number of school exclusions, seeking clarity on why exclusions and days lost have increased so sharply and how the position compares with Wales, the UK and internationally. They probed the prevalence of repeat exclusions, what happens to those pupils, and whether the current pattern is sustainable. Several members also asked for clearer explanations of how permanent exclusions can be rescinded, why this happens, and what processes and safeguards are in place when pupils move between schools or into the PRU. Questions focused heavily on whether enough proactive, early intervention work is being done to build resilience and prevent behavioural escalation, particularly in younger pupils.

There were concerns about the support pupils receive during and after an exclusion, including what a “typical” exclusion period looks like, how safeguarding is maintained, and whether more could be done to help schools manage reintegration. Members also queried the effectiveness of current interventions—such as trauma-informed practice, managed moves, PRU involvement, and multi-agency working—and asked what evidence exists for which approaches reduce repeat exclusions most effectively. Another theme was inconsistency between schools: members wanted to know how differing exclusion practices are challenged, what formal escalation exists, and how disproportionate numbers in particular schools are addressed. The impact of school budget pressures, staffing reductions, and the flexibility (or potential rigidity) of the new Welsh curriculum were also explored.

Finally, members highlighted information gaps, questioning why exclusion reasons were not broken down in the report and whether future reports could provide more detail, including parental involvement. They also raised broader issues around parental disengagement, smartphone use among children, and the need for clarity and transparency around coding systems, governor oversight, and the capacity of local authority officers to meet rising demand.

#### **Chair’s Conclusion:**

## *Monmouthshire Scrutiny*

The Chair thanked officers and particularly the Headteachers for attending, and extended the members' thanks to their teams for their hard work. In addition, the Chair highlighted the freshly published Estyn reports on Monmouthshire Education Service and Youth Service, which are positive reports that reflect well on the council's work and should be recognized as such. These reports will be reassuring to service users, parents and learners. He congratulated the council's education team.

### **Report Item 4: Schools Health Research Network**

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues:

Members questioned the extent of multi-agency involvement in pupil wellbeing, particularly the roles of counselling, psychoeducation and emotional regulation support for young people before issues escalate. They asked how resilience-building best practice is shared and embedded across schools, and raised concerns about inconsistent participation, asking why not all primary schools or the PRU were included in the SHRN survey. Additional questions focused on whether teaching staff are sufficiently trained to deliver mental health education effectively, and whether there is a risk of pathologising normal childhood stress.

Members queried whether the wellbeing dataset focuses too much on process rather than outcomes, and whether it provides a sufficiently complete picture given that it is anonymised and high-level. They raised concerns about whether issues such as sleep difficulties, physical activity and broader lifestyle factors were being explored meaningfully, and questioned how the data could be used more actively across the curriculum to promote pupil ownership of wellbeing. They also asked whether responses from pupils might be influenced by social desirability, potentially limiting the reliability of some findings.

### **Chair's Conclusion:**

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

**SUBJECT: 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET – FINANCIAL UPDATE**  
**MEETING: CABINET**  
**DATE: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026**  
**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**1. PURPOSE:**

1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 3.1 That Cabinet note a forecast revenue budget underspend at update 3 of £1,146,000, representing a variance of 0.5% of total budget. This is a significant improvement of £1,117,000 from the forecast underspend of £29,000 that was reported at the second financial update.
- 3.2 The improved forecast is primarily driven by changes in Social Care where the ability to maximise the impact of grant funding to meet core expenditure has benefited the forecast by around £600,000, alongside improvements in debt financing budgets of around £500,000.
- 3.3 That Cabinet note that £800,000 of any confirmed underspend that is realised at year-end will be required to maintain the Council fund reserve at a level of 5% of the proposed net revenue budget for 2026/27.
- 3.4 The Cabinet notes the projected increase of £3,426,000 in the cumulative schools' reserves deficit, a deterioration of £456,000 compared to the previous forecast. School balances are expected to close the financial year at a deficit of £7,517,000, with nineteen of thirty-five schools anticipated to have a deficit balance. Further detail of individual schools' movements are shown in **Appendix 4**.

- 3.5 That Cabinet note that 75% of the forecast deficit relates to three schools - King Henry VIII 3-19 School, Chepstow Comprehensive School and the Pupil Referral Service, with all three of these schools being a focus of support and challenge from the Local Authority to ensure budgets return to a surplus within the agreed recovery plan timeframe.
- 3.6 The Cabinet note the forecast Capital budget expenditure for the year of £50.8 million, alongside projected slippage of schemes into 2026/27 of £21.0 million. No significant variances are anticipated at the current time with minor underspends of £35,000 reported across a small number of grant funded schemes. Additionally, the Council's capital contingency budget of £1.3m has not been required and will be released with the funding utilised as part of the 2026/27 budget proposals.
- 3.7 The Cabinet approve the capital budget revisions outlined in **Appendix 5** that have resulted from the receipt of new, or variation of existing grants and external contributions that weren't included in the original capital budget approved at the start of the year. Under the Council's financial procedures, any changes to the capital budget that are fully funded by grants or external contributions must be approved by Cabinet.
- 3.8 That Cabinet note that as we move towards the remaining weeks of the financial year, many of the risks highlighted in previous updates begin to fall away. There remain a small number of specific budgetary risks that do still have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2025/26:
- Inflation increased by 3.4% in the year to December 2025, exceeding government targets and budget projections, which will impact costs for the remainder of the financial year.
  - Debt recovery rates are declining, especially in Council Tax and Social Care.
  - The number of Council tax discounts and exemptions continue to rise which impacts overall collection values.
  - The growing cumulative schools' reserves deficit weakens the Council's financial resilience.

## 4 KEY ISSUES:

### 4.1 Context

- 4.2 The 2025/26 budget round reflected the sustained period of increased levels and complexity of demand within School ALN provision, and Adults and Children's social care, which were addressed through significant base budget increases.

4.3 The budget set by Council in March also needed to consider other headwinds which continued to impact the Councils service operating environment:

- The wider socio-economic landscape and cost of living challenges that continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and impact upon income generating services.
- The wider public sector challenges which impact upon Council services, notably within Health where efforts to improve patient pathways impact upon the level and complexity of demand for Social care.
- Headline inflation rates remaining above UK Government targets, with some discrete areas of Council services continuing to experience cost pressures on supplies and services.
- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained higher for longer and above previous UK Government forecasts.

4.4 The above results in a growing need for supportive Council services, pressure on income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a higher-cost operating environment.

#### 4.5 Latest revenue budget position

4.6 Full Council approved a total revenue expenditure budget of £236,778,000 for the 2025/26 financial year. This is inclusive of £28,352,000 of precepts or levies for Police, Fire, and Community Council services that are paid directly to these organisations. The Council's net controllable revenue budget spent on delivering Council services is therefore £208,426,000.

4.7 The latest financial update indicates significant improvement against the revenue budget from earlier forecasts:

Financial Update	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend
1	£533,000
2	(£29,000)
3	(£1,146,000)

4.8 This is broken down at a directorate level as follows:

**Table 1: Revenue budget forecast by directorate**

Directorate	Budget £000's	Forecast £000's	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) £000's	% Variance to budget
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	78,187	77,710	(477)	-0.6%
Learning, Skills & Economy	72,635	73,098	462	0.6%
Infrastructure	21,462	20,989	(473)	-2.2%
Place & Community Wellbeing	6,223	6,140	(83)	-1.3%
People, Performance & Partnerships	6,273	6,280	6	0.1%
Legal & Governance	3,089	3,165	76	2.5%
Resources	8,803	8,651	(151)	-1.7%
Debt financing, reserves, precepts & levies, insurances	40,106	40,579	473	1.2%
<b>Expenditure to be financed</b>	<b>236,778</b>	<b>236,612</b>	<b>(166)</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>
Financing	(236,778)	(237,758)	(980)	-0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>

- 4.9 The principal areas of variance across service budgets are noted below, along with a summary schedule at **Appendix 1** at the end of this report, and a more detailed explanation outlined in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.10 The position within **Adult Social Care** reflects a significantly improved outlook, with the service now forecasting a year-end underspend of £861,000, representing a £535,000 positive movement since Update 2. This improvement is largely attributable to the in-year allocation of external funding - most notably £914,000 from the Pathways of Care Transformation Grant, and full utilisation of the Regional Integration Fund. Alongside these financial gains, the service has delivered operational efficiencies, including reduced internal care-at-home staffing expenditure and progress in expanding reablement capacity. The service has also exceeded its case review savings target, achieving £313,000 against a target of £250,000. These actions demonstrate continued focus on cost avoidance, early intervention and supporting individuals to maximise independence.
- 4.11 Despite the improved position, underlying demand pressures remain considerable. Residential care activity continues to rise, with seven additional placements since update 2 and a total of 367 placements across the County, reflecting demographic pressures and increasing complexity, particularly related to later-stage dementia. Demand for care at home is also increasing, coinciding with ongoing winter

pressures and sustained hospital discharge activity. Further challenges remain around progressing CHC cases for younger adults with mental health or learning disabilities - a Wales-wide issue impacting the ability to transfer eligible costs to health budgets. While debt linked to unpaid care charges has remained stable over the last period, it continues to require active monitoring and intervention.

- 4.12 **Children's Social care** has experienced its first significant rise in the number of children looked after for several years, increasing from 190 at update 1 to 199 at the end of October, and to 206 by the end of December, including 16 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Despite this increase, the longer-term trend remains relatively stable, but service activity continues to be intense, with 28 children becoming looked after and 23 leaving care in the first six months alone - levels of movement that have continued throughout the year. The financial impact has been partially mitigated by prioritising fostering and kinship placements in line with the placement strategy, and in part by UASC grant funding.
- 4.13 A significant ongoing cost pressure relates to the £368,000 over spend on external counsel and barrister fees, reflecting the complexity and necessity of public law family court proceedings, including two exceptionally complex cases this year. Further pressure has arisen from a £332,000 reduction in the Welsh Government grant that supports Family Support services. Despite the financial impact, Family Support provision has been maintained due to its critical role in safe family functioning, preventing escalation into care and supporting safe reunification. This area remains central to cost avoidance, given the high cost of placements, and forms part of the 2026/27 budget proposals. The service remains on track to achieve 100% of its £1.9 million savings linked to practice changes and placement development. However, the financial position remains highly sensitive to any new high-cost demand entering the system - an area that inherently carries unpredictability and continues to represent a material risk to the service's overall budget sustainability.
- 4.14 **Housing Services** is forecasting an overspend of £501,000, a further deterioration of £135,000 since the last update. The overspend is driven primarily by the delayed opening of Severn View, alongside several voids within existing provision, higher maintenance and repair costs, make-good works following the hand-back of B&B units, rising costs within private leasing arrangements, reduced income from rent arrears and bad debt, and staffing pressures. These issues reflect the inherent complexity and cost of providing emergency and temporary accommodation for individuals with high support needs. Although the service has benefitted from a £254,000 reduction in Housing Benefit clawback, this has not been sufficient to offset the wider cost pressures. Mitigating actions include reducing voids where possible and progressing the new temporary accommodation model at Severn View, which is expected to ease future financial pressures depending on demand. Positively, the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation remains at its lowest level for many years, indicating progress in providing more stable and appropriate accommodation, and reducing reliance on the most expensive forms of provision.
- 4.15 **Learning, Skills & Economy** is forecasted to overspend of £462,000, an adverse variance of £293,000 since the last update due to an increase in the number of pupils accessing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) bespoke support, which remains a costly option due to the

use of third party providers. The draft 2026/27 budget proposals aim to open a local SEMH (Social & Emotional Mental Health) provision which will be able to support these pupils and reduce future costs.

- 4.16 **Facilities and Fleet** is forecasting a £158,000 overspend with higher maintenance, fuel, hire and software costs leading to a forecast overspend in fleet operations. Passenger Transport is also forecast to overspend, mainly from pressure on external operator costs caused by shortfalls in distance-eligibility savings, revised pupil numbers, and routes deemed unsafe. Additional pressures stem from PRS contract growth, higher season-ticket costs and unplanned safer-walking-route assessments, with internal operations also experiencing income loss.
- 4.17 **Schools Catering** is reporting a £214,000 underspend, driven by part-year staffing savings, higher UFSM income and reduced supplies costs - with the service is on track to deliver 791,000 meals this year with a 71% take-up. **Decarbonisation** shows a £173,000 underspend, reflecting strong income performance from the solar farm and wider renewables portfolio supported by favourable ROC rates and improved system efficiency, alongside staffing savings, though partially offset by a £102K pressure from a prior-year corporate mileage saving that will not materialise this year. **Corporate energy savings** of £123,000 are forecast due to lower-than-budgeted energy consumption.
- 4.18 **Leisure and Wellbeing** is forecasting a £200,000 underspend, driven by stronger-than-expected income across leisure facilities. Quarter 3 performance has been particularly positive, with the annual membership campaign delivering high take-up and boosting projected income, while Outdoor Adventure, Sports Development and Play services have seen notable improvements.
- 4.19 **Development Management and Building Control** is forecasting a £127,000 overspend, driven by reduced building control fee income, higher software costs, and lower-than-anticipated planning income. **Highways Development and Car Parks** is projecting a £206,000 overspend, primarily due to under-recovery of fixed-penalty income, the filling of previously vacant posts, and higher publication costs linked to new fees and charges. The adverse movement since update 2 reflects £30,000 in additional maintenance costs to replace pay-and-display machines damaged during Storm Claudia, free December parking introduced as part of the storm response, and an overall downturn in pay-and-display income.
- 4.20 **Increased cost of Employers' National Insurance Contributions (NIC's)** - For the purposes of budget setting, it was assumed that the additional £3.32m pressure relating to the increase in employers' NIC's for directly employed staff would be fully funded. Confirmation was received in July 2025 that Monmouthshire would receive £2.56m of funding, a shortfall of £761k or 23%. Whilst it has been confirmed that the funding will transfer into the Welsh Government grant base for 2026/27, it was necessary to consider the recurrent cost pressure of £761k as part of the budget process for 2026/27.

- 4.21 The **National Joint Council (NJC) pay award** for 2025/26 was agreed in July at 3.2% which is marginally above the budgeted assumption of 3.1%. The resultant additional cost pressure of £0.1m was funded in full by in-year grant support from Welsh Government that was announced in October 2025.
- 4.22 Welsh Government confirmed a 4% **pay award for teaching staff**, implemented from September 2025. This increase is above the Councils budget assumption of a 3.1% increase and represents an additional cost of around £225,000. Welsh Government have provided additional in-year grant funding to meet the increased cost in full.
- 4.23 **Debt financing costs** have moved favourably since the last update and are forecast to be £43,000 under budget, reflective of higher than expected cash balances that have mitigated the need for further borrowing. Overall **Council tax collection** is estimated to out-perform budget by £500,000 which is primarily due to a reduced call on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) budget.

### Impact of Storm Claudia

- 4.24 The total revenue cost incurred to date in relation to the response and recovery from Storm Claudia is currently estimated at £556,000. The main categories of expenditure include:

- Additional employee costs, including overtime and time off in lieu
- Plant and machinery costs associated with clean-up operations
- Replacement of damaged street furniture and signage
- Waste disposal costs for flood-damaged goods
- Repairs to CCTV systems and car park ticket machines
- Insurance excess costs
- Specialist cleaning services for sports grounds and skate parks

- 4.25 This expenditure has been incurred within multiple services and is included within the directorate forecasts outlined in this report. A claim for funding support will be submitted to Welsh Government (WG) to access Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme (EFAS) funding. The Council's de-minimus funding threshold is £455,000, with WG committing to funding 85% of eligible costs incurred above this threshold. Based on current estimates, this results in a potential reimbursement of approximately £86,000, which will partially offset the overall costs incurred. This potential funding is not currently reflected within the forecast given the early stage of preparation for the claim.

- 4.26 At the time of reporting, £124,000 of householder support payments have been issued, along with £102,000 in payments to support affected businesses. These costs will be met in full by WG grant and have no impact on this forecast.
- 4.27 The impact on the capital costs for repairing and restoring Council assets is still uncertain. Early estimates were a total cost of around £9 million, with approximately £3.5 million likely to be uninsured. This is because infrastructure assets like highways, footways, culverts, street furniture, and public rights of way are typically uninsurable - they make up a unique, continuous network, cannot be resold, and are impractical to replace or relocate. Insuring these assets would therefore not offer good value for taxpayers. At the time of this report, WG has confirmed additional capital flooding grant of £235,000 to partially fund the capital works required. Ongoing discussions continue with WG officials to explore any opportunity for further funding support.

#### 4.28 Budgeted service savings

- 4.29 As part of the approved revenue budget, services were required to bring forward and deliver savings totalling £10,701,000. The current forecast indicates that 93.1% (£9,964,000) of these will be achieved – a slight improvement from the 90.4% reported at update 2 due to Adults social care practice change savings being further clarified.
- 4.30 Full details of progress against individual savings targets can be found at **Appendix 3** to this report. The main variances are as follows:

**Table 2: Progress against budgeted savings targets**

Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Current Forecast	Variance	Percentage met	Comment
	£000	£000	£000	%	
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,843)	107	96.4%	£170k Homelessness – Delay in Severn view opening that impacts on 4 months of savings being generated. Offset by over-performance of £63k Adult's services practice change.
Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100.0%	No variance forecast

Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,185)	494	91.3%	£334k Passenger Transport routes - Pupil figures have changed, and some routes are unsafe, requiring continued transport. £160k Waste funding – the final extended producer responsibility funding has been confirmed as slightly lower than anticipated.
Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(531)	75	87.6%	£75k Planning application fee increase – Fees will be increased from 1 <sup>st</sup> December, meaning full £100k based on October start cannot be achieved.
People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	Savings anticipated from further structure changes are not deemed achievable following further review. Savings in subscriptions has not been achieved.
Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100.0%	No variance forecast
Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100.0%	No variance forecast
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(10,701)</b>	<b>(9,964)</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>93.1%</b>	

#### 4.31 Schools' budgets and reserves

4.32 The overall level of school reserves are currently forecast to move further into deficit by £3,426,000 by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, to a collective deficit balance of £7,517,000. This is a deterioration of £456,000 since the last update, and £711,000 above the budgets that schools have collectively set for the year.

School reserve balances at 31 <sup>st</sup> March (Surplus) / Deficit	2022 £000	2023 £000	2024 £000	2025 £000	2026 (Forecast) £000
Comprehensive schools	(2,253)	(1,259)	976	1,366	1,917
Middle schools	0	0	329	1,386	2,173
Primary schools	(4,622)	(3,027)	(1,142)	(306)	819
Special schools	(79)	31	742	1,645	2,608
<b>Total</b>	<b>(6,955)</b>	<b>(4,255)</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>4,091</b>	<b>7,517</b>

- 4.33 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.
- 4.34 All schools with a deficit budget must agree a recovery plan with the Local Authority - this plan will set out clear actions that the school and Governing Body must take to see the school to return to a surplus. These plans are monitored on a frequent basis and where schools do not meet their recovery plans further challenge is provided by the Local Authority to understand the reasons and to look at mitigating actions to bring plans back on track.
- 4.35 75% of the forecast deficit relates to three schools - King Henry VIII 3-19 School, Chepstow Comprehensive School and the Pupil Referral Service, with all three of these schools being a focus of support and challenge from the Local Authority to ensure budgets return to a surplus within the agreed recovery plan timeframe.

4.36 **Capital Programme**

- 4.37 Capital expenditure of £50.84 million is forecast for the year, with no significant variances anticipated at the current time. A small under spend of £35,000 is currently reported across a small number of specific grant funded schemes which has no impact on the Council's available capital funding as it is specific to individual schemes.
- 4.38 The £1.3m capital contingency budget remains unallocated and will now be released and utilised to fund further capital investment in the 2026/27 capital programme.
- 4.39 Capital schemes by nature are usually multi-year, and some slippage is to be expected as expenditure profiles change based on flex in project circumstances. A total of 32 capital schemes are indicating that slippage will be required into 2026/27 totalling £21.0 million. This represents slippage of just under a third of the total budget for the year. Recent experience suggests that the final amount of schemes requiring slippage will increase as the year progresses as scheme progress becomes clearer. A full review of slippage will be undertaken at year-end to establish the need for schemes to continue into 2026/27 or alternatively if any re-prioritisation is required.
- 4.40 **Capital budget revisions** - During the financial year the Council has received a number of new grants to support capital investment that was not included in the original capital budget approved at the start of the year. Additionally, some existing grant budgets have needed to flex as final allocations or timings are clarified. **Appendix 5** outlines the changes that now need Cabinet approval as per the Council's financial procedures.

- 4.41 **Capital receipts** – The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. The full balance of banked capital receipts is fully committed meaning there is little scope to support additional capital investment. This also means that the level of capitalisation direction support to the revenue budget is profiled to taper down to zero over the medium term.
- 4.42 A significant capital receipt of £2.5 million was received in December 2025 in relation to the sale of the site of the former Mounton House School, Pwllmeryic, Chepstow.

**Table 5: Capital receipts balances**

<b>Capital receipt balances</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Balance as at 1st April	6,083	4,627	4,430	3,474	2,819
Capital receipts used for financing	(289)	(367)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	(708)	0
Capital receipts Received	2,500	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,878	803	103	103
<b>Forecast Balance as at 31st March</b>	<b>4,627</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>3,474</b>	<b>2,819</b>	<b>2,871</b>

#### 4.43 **Financial implications and future focus**

- 4.44 The budget planning framework for 2025/26 reaffirmed the need to progress the Council on a path towards financial sustainability including conserving an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience, of which the Council's reserves are a key component. As a consequence, the final revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 did not include any use of reserves to meet recurrent revenue expenditure.
- 4.45 The delivery of the forecast underspend at year-end, alongside budget recovery action being delivered within schools is fundamental in maintaining financial stability and limiting any further impact upon the Council's reserves.
- 4.46 The Council's revenue contingency budget of £850,000 remains fully in-tact despite the in-year budget accommodating some significant cost pressures, notably from Storm Claudia, and from the shortfall in funding for increased employers' national insurance costs. Should the contingency budget remain uncalled upon, it will increase the forecast underspend position currently reported. This will allow the Council the opportunity to maintain reserves at a prudent level in line with the aspirations of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 4.47 Services are forecasting to achieve over 93% of the targeted savings which indicates a strong improvement compared to recent trends and demonstrates the effectiveness of ongoing efforts to implement service changes that preserve quality of provision while reducing overall costs.
- 4.48 The service commentaries provided do indicate that there remain underlying cost pressures that will be recurrent into 2026/27 unless successfully reversed or mitigated. These have been assessed and validated as part of the draft budget process for 2026/27, with additional budget provision made if considered appropriate.
- 4.49 The need for strong collective financial discipline remains crucial. The increasing school's deficit places additional strain on the Council's financial resilience, reducing overall cash balances and the ability to mitigate against financial risks over the medium term.
- 4.50 In light of this, the range of measures that have been used successfully over recent periods will continue to be implemented, including, but not limited to:
- Maximising all grant and income opportunities, including the transfer of core costs into grant where conditions allow
  - Vacancy management with a strategic and thoughtful approach to the filling vacant posts that is in line with the needs of the service, and the longer term objectives of the Council through its Community & Corporate plan.
  - Maximising the opportunity to meet the costs of organisational reform from capital receipts where regulations allow

#### 4.51 Remaining budgetary risks

- 4.52 As we move towards the remaining weeks of the financial year, many of the risks highlighted in previous updates fall away. There remain a small number of specific budgetary risks that do still have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2025/26:
- **Further non-delivery of budget savings targets**, especially where these involve income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models or those involving community or other partners.
  - The trend of **reducing debt recovery**, particularly within Council tax and Social Care where there has been a slowing down in collection rates, and where there are increasing numbers of discounts and exemptions being awarded.
  - The number of **Council tax discounts and exemptions** awarded continues to trend upwards, impacting the overall value of income collected.

- **The recruitment market** remains challenging, with some services encountering difficulty hiring and retaining suitably qualified and skilled staff. Whilst this will result in a reduction in immediate expenditure, it will impact the ability to deliver services in line with the Councils objectives.
- **Inflation** rose by 3.4% in the 12 months to December 2025 and remains well above government targets and above budgeted assumptions. This has the consequence of increasing costs and contracts agreed over the remainder of the financial year.
- **Schools reserve balances** – the further forecast draw on balances for 2025/26 of £3.4 million would significantly increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit that is being carried on the Council’s balance sheet. This consequently impacts upon the Council’s overall financial resilience and increases its risk exposure by reducing available balance sheet resources.

## 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The report itself covers the resource implications of the entirety of the revenue budget activity during the year. There are no further resource implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

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## EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 5.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress being made against the revenue budget of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality and future generations’ implications directly arising from this report.

## CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team  
 Cabinet  
 Performance and overview committee

## BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Appendix 1** – Summary service variances
- Appendix 2** – Detailed service variances and commentary, Schools reserves, Capital programme
- Appendix 3** – Progress against budgeted savings
- Appendix 4** – Individual school balance forecasts

**Appendix 5** – Capital budget revisions

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## Appendix 1 – Summary of service variances forecast

Directorate	Update 3 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(477)	-0.6%	<b>Housing &amp; Homelessness</b> £502k – Delay in opening of Severn view, void and repair costs, rent arrears	<b>Adult services</b> £861k – ability to meet core costs from available grant funding
			<b>Support services</b> £121k – delayed recruitment of Head of housing and public protection	
Children, Learning, Skills & Economy	462	0.6%	<b>ALN costs</b> £425k – Primarily due to increased demand for pupil support, offset by out of county placement and transport savings <b>Breakfast clubs</b> £45k – Additional staffing and catering costs	
Infrastructure	(473)	-2.2%	<b>Passenger transport</b> £138k – Shortfall in meeting pupil transport route savings £223k, reduced income on internal operations £98k offset by additional grant	<b>Corporate energy saving</b> £123k – reduction in consumption
			<b>Fleet Maintenance</b> £43k – hire charges and EV charging inspection and maintenance	<b>Decarbonisation</b> £173k – increased income from the Solar farm, staff vacancies, offset by inability to meet corporate mileage savings
				<b>Schools catering</b> £214k – increased grant and staff vacancies
				<b>Highways design, flooding &amp; road safety</b> £106k – savings in professional fees, supplies & services and some staff vacancies
Place & Community Wellbeing	(83)	-1.3%	<b>Car parking</b> £206k – under recovery of fixed penalty charges, higher than anticipated publication costs, reduced P&D income, Storm Claudia impact	<b>Performance, Finance and Resources</b> £174k – staff vacancies

Directorate	Update 3 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
			<b>Development Management and Building Control</b> £127k - under-recovery of building control fees, increased software costs, lower than anticipated planning fees	<b>Leisure &amp; Wellbeing</b> £200k – Higher income from leisure facilities has offset temporary closure at Abergavenny LC.
<b>People, Performance and Partnerships</b>	<b>6</b>	0.1%	<b>Communications</b> £60k - Staffing structure changes and reduction in income. <b>People Management</b> £51k – unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity <b>Procurement</b> £45k – higher than anticipated contract costs	<b>Payroll &amp; System Support</b> £113k – reduction in system and supplies & services spend and staff vacancy <b>Contact centre</b> £50k – reduction in system and licence costs
<b>Legal &amp; Governance</b>	<b>76</b>	2.5%	<b>Members</b> £43k – overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges. <b>Legal</b> £64k – inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings and an anticipated reduction in court fee income	<b>Staff savings</b> £31k
<b>Resources</b>	<b>(151)</b>	-1.7%	<b>Castlegate</b> £93k - increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage <b>County Farms</b> £77k – Void Property Costs from covering running costs of vacant units, professional fees for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management	<b>Landlord services</b> £292k - staff vacancies offset by a shortfall in other rental income

Directorate	Update 3 Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Debt financing, precepts, levies & insurances	473	1.2%	<b>Earmarked reserves</b> £480k – unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within financing section	<b>Lower net borrowing costs</b> £523k - reflective of higher than anticipated cash balances, forward starting loans, and capital slippage.
			<b>Employers' national insurance</b> £761k – Funding shortfall from Welsh Government to cover increased costs incurred	<b>Non-specific grants</b> £245k – funding relating to pay award pressures that has not been distributed to services
Financing	(980)	-0.4%		<b>Council tax reduction scheme</b> £500k - cases have tracked slightly lower than budgeted for the year
				<b>Council tax premiums</b> £480k – The collection rate is currently higher than anticipated when setting the budget
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>		

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- [Section 1](#) Revenue budget summary forecast  
[Section 2](#) Detailed service commentary  
[Section 3](#) School balances update  
[Section 4](#) Capital programme update

## Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

**Table 1: 2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by directorate**

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Variance from Update 2
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,916	271	78,187	77,710	(477)	149	(626)
Learning, Skills & Economy	73,030	(395)	72,635	73,098	462	169	293
Infrastructure	21,442	20	21,462	20,989	(473)	(314)	(158)
Place & Community Wellbeing	6,009	213	6,223	6,140	(83)	(21)	(62)
People, Performance & Partnerships	6,317	(43)	6,273	6,280	6	48	(42)
Legal & Governance	3,050	39	3,089	3,165	76	69	7
Resources	9,083	(280)	8,803	8,651	(151)	(145)	(6)
Corporate	29,147	350	29,497	30,013	516	680	(163)
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>225,994</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>226,169</b>	<b>226,046</b>	<b>(123)</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>(758)</b>
Appropriations	10,784	(175)	10,609	10,566	(43)	541	(584)
<b>Expenditure to be Financed</b>	<b>236,778</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>236,778</b>	<b>236,612</b>	<b>(166)</b>	<b>1,176</b>	<b>(1,342)</b>
Financing	(236,778)	0	(236,778)	(237,759)	(980)	(1,205)	225
<b>Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>(29)</b>	<b>(1,117)</b>

**Table 2: 2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by service**

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Variance from Update 2
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	47,536	284	47,821	46,959	(861)	(326)	(536)
Children Services	24,105	202	24,306	24,308	2	83	(81)
Housing & Homelessness	2,512	199	2,711	3,212	502	366	136
Public Protection	1,886	45	1,931	1,933	2	0	2
SCH Support	1,877	(459)	1,418	1,297	(121)	26	(147)
<b>Social Care, Health &amp; Safeguarding</b>	<b>77,916</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>78,187</b>	<b>77,710</b>	<b>(477)</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>(626)</b>
Economy, Employment & Skills	853	(48)	805	812	7	12	(4)
Emergency Planning	178	0	178	195	17	16	0
Individual Schools Budget	58,790	0	58,790	58,665	(126)	6	(131)
Resources	1,217	(50)	1,167	1,280	113	59	54
Standards	11,992	(297)	11,695	12,146	451	77	375
<b>Learning, Skills &amp; Economy</b>	<b>73,030</b>	<b>(395)</b>	<b>72,635</b>	<b>73,098</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>293</b>
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	559	(213)	345	332	(13)	5	(18)
Facilities, Fleet & Decarbonisation	11,739	84	11,823	11,980	158	385	(227)
Neighbourhood Services	8,668	(34)	8,634	8,528	(107)	(460)	353
Operations	476	183	659	149	(511)	(244)	(266)
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>21,442</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21,462</b>	<b>20,989</b>	<b>(473)</b>	<b>(314)</b>	<b>(158)</b>
Culture and Community Learning	943	(82)	861	879	18	18	(0)
Countryside, Destination and Environment	1,149	(75)	1,074	1,013	(61)	(36)	(25)
Leisure and Wellbeing	1,764	(121)	1,643	1,443	(200)	(2)	(198)
Performance, Finance and Resources	1,639	316	1,954	1,781	(174)	(80)	(94)
Placemaking, Highways & Flooding	515	175	691	1,024	333	78	255
<b>Place &amp; Community Wellbeing</b>	<b>6,009</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>6,223</b>	<b>6,140</b>	<b>(83)</b>	<b>(21)</b>	<b>(62)</b>
Chief Executives Office	2,917	(73)	2,844	2,880	35	48	(13)
People	1,934	(10)	1,924	1,894	(30)	(14)	(16)

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Variance from Update 2
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,466	39	1,505	1,506	1	14	(14)
<b>People, Performance &amp; Partnerships</b>	<b>6,317</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>6,273</b>	<b>6,280</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>(42)</b>
Democratic Services	1,957	39	1,996	2,024	28	27	1
Legal and Land Charges	1,093	0	1,093	1,141	48	42	6
<b>Legal &amp; Governance</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>3,089</b>	<b>3,165</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>7</b>
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	2,133	(41)	2,092	1,973	(118)	(151)	33
Corporate Health & Safety	163	0	163	163	0	0	0
Finance	3,791	(239)	3,552	3,540	(11)	24	(35)
Information Communication Technology	2,996	0	2,996	2,975	(21)	(18)	(4)
<b>Resources</b>	<b>9,083</b>	<b>(280)</b>	<b>8,803</b>	<b>8,651</b>	<b>(151)</b>	<b>(145)</b>	<b>(6)</b>
Precepts & Levies	28,699	0	28,699	28,666	(33)	(33)	0
Coroner's	278	0	278	318	40	18	22
Archives	228	0	228	228	0	0	0
Corporate Management	452	0	452	390	(62)	(67)	5
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	387	0	387	387	0	0	0
Strategic Initiatives	(2,820)	350	(2,470)	(1,899)	571	761	(190)
Insurance	1,923	0	1,923	1,923	0	0	0
<b>Corporate Costs &amp; Levies</b>	<b>29,147</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>29,497</b>	<b>30,013</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>(163)</b>
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>225,994</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>226,169</b>	<b>226,046</b>	<b>(123)</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>(758)</b>
Interest & Investment Income	(788)	0	(788)	(1,198)	(410)	(257)	(153)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	7,624	0	7,624	7,759	135	429	(294)
Charges Required under Regulation	6,158	0	6,158	6,014	(144)	(215)	71
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(2)	(2)	(1)	(1)
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,918)	0	(3,918)	(4,020)	(102)	8	(110)
Contributions to Reserves	2,483	0	2,483	2,963	480	576	(96)

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 3	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 2	Variance from Update 2
Contributions from reserves	(775)	(175)	(950)	(950)	0	0	0
Contribution from Council Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Appropriations</b>	<b>10,784</b>	<b>(175)</b>	<b>10,609</b>	<b>10,566</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>(584)</b>
<b>Expenditure to be Financed</b>	<b>236,778</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>236,778</b>	<b>236,612</b>	<b>(166)</b>	<b>1,176</b>	<b>(1,342)</b>
General Government Grants	(100,637)	0	(100,637)	(100,637)	0	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	(34,612)	0	(34,612)	(34,612)	0	0	0
Council tax	(110,596)	0	(110,596)	(111,076)	(480)	(785)	305
Council Tax Benefit Support	9,066	0	9,066	8,566	(500)	(420)	(80)
<b>Financing</b>	<b>(236,778)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(236,778)</b>	<b>(237,758)</b>	<b>(980)</b>	<b>(1,205)</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>(1,146)</b>	<b>(29)</b>	<b>(1,117)</b>

## Section 2 - Directorate – Service Variance Comments

<b>SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH &amp; SAFEGUARDING</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>1,074</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>(477)</b>	<b>0</b>

### **CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY**

At update 3 the directorate is forecast to underspend by £477K, a further improvement of £626K since the last update.

The additional improvement is mainly attributable to the full utilisation of the £914K Pathways of Care Transformation (hospital discharge) which has helped support the costs of care and service provision within adult services. The service also largely benefits from the continuation of the £1.1M Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant, as well as the Regional Integration funding which helps to support core costs. However, there remains underlying pressures and risks within adult social care particularly the on-going increased demand for residential placements; the extent of grant funding which supports essential services; increased workforce / operational pressure across the social care and health system.

In terms of the directorate savings target when this year's budget was set, if Housing is excluded, has not only been met in full but has been exceeded slightly by £63K due to Adult review savings pushing past its target. Once Housing's savings are considered, the directorate then falls short of its savings target as Housing has not met its target by £135K due to the delayed opening of Severn View.

Debt due to clients not paying their adult assessed care charges has remained broadly similar to that of update 2, but this is still far too high at £2.3M. Unsecured debt remains an issue and will require further addressing moving forward.

As with Children's, Public Protection is predicted, within £2K, to spend its budget allocation. Support Services is estimating a £121K underspend due to the delayed recruitment to the Head of Housing and Public Protection. This post will more likely be appointed in the new financial year.

### **Adult Services**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>(326)</b>	<b>(861)</b>	<b>0</b>

The position at update 3 highlights a projected underspend at year end of £861K, which is a considerably improved position of a further £535K since update 2.

It is a somewhat complicated picture across the service with a number of over and underspends against different service areas, reflecting both changing patterns of demand, the allocation of grants part way through the year, and the on-going impact of service re-organisation.

The improved position has largely been achieved through the allocation of £914K via the Pathways of Care Transformation Grant, and through ensuring full spend against the Regional Integration Fund revenue grant. The pathways of care transformation grant were allocated part way through the year. Recruitment against the grant is on-going and is now fully committed against spend into the next financial year. We also benefit from the continuation of the £1.1M Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant.

Savings are also being made against the internal care at home staffing salary with increasing amounts of care being commissioned through external providers. Although there are challenges in recruiting to in-house carers, the service is seeking to increase the number of carers employed into our in-house reablement services. This is in line with our service transformation plan to expand reablement so that more people have the opportunity to maximise their independence. This represents cost avoidance for the Local Authority as we continue to reduce the number of people who do not need care and support at the end of a period of reablement.

The main pressure includes the full year effect of care provision and adult placements made at the end of the previous financial year and the ongoing rise in residential placements. There have been an additional 7 residential placements since update 2. Across the County there are a total of 367 residential placements demonstrating the on-going increased demand throughout the year. This is in keeping with the aging demographic of the county together with the complexity of needs experienced by our older residents. Residential placements for people living with later stage dementia are generating a particular budgetary pressure. The demand for care at home is also showing an increase since update 2.

This picture of on-going increased demand reflects the underlying budgetary pressure within adult social care, with the improved position largely being attributable to additional grant money. At month 9 we are still in the middle of winter pressures, whereby the numbers of people needing services to support their discharge from hospital continues to increase and place further pressure on the service.

Since update 2 the services has continued to achieve its target of reviewing cases and has validated the outcomes from the reviews that have already taken place. This has yielded savings of £313K meaning that the service has exceeded its saving target by £63K.

We are still experiencing difficulties in progressing CHC cases for younger people with mental health and learning disabilities that is impacting on our ability to move eligible adults into health service budgets. This is an issue for all Welsh Local Authorities

Despite the unpredictability of the coming months, the service continues to take every opportunity to adopt cost avoidance approaches to care. Our information advice and assistance service (IAA) is now in the initial stages of implementation with 5 new IAA workers now operational. This allows us to develop our preventative offer and will feed our new intake model where reablement is the first consideration to mitigate or prevent care.

Debt due to unpaid Adult social care charges remains a challenge but has not increased since update 2. We are continuing to take actions both preventatively and in ensuring appropriate recovery actions are taken.

<b>Children's Services</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

At the end of update 1 there were 190 children looked after including 15 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, increasing to 199 (with 16 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) at the end of October. At the end of December there were 206 children looked after (including 16 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). This year has seen the first significant increase in

numbers of children looked after for some time, although the underlying trend remains relatively stable now.

The service activity of assessment, family support and risk management remains intense. For example, during this first 6 months of the year 28 children became looked after and 23 children left care. This level of service activity with children entering and leaving care has continued.

The cost pressure of additional children has been mitigated through placing children within fostering and kinship placements (in line with our placement strategy). Nevertheless, there are cost pressures associated with placement costs at month 9, offset through grant funding for UASC and through a slight delay in our in-house residential provision becoming fully operational.

At update 2 the service showed an improved position because through successful negotiations the costs related to annual uplifts of external placements were contained.

There remains a significant pressure related to the use of external counsel / barrister costs for children who are in a public law process in the family courts. This represents a pressure of £368K based on current activity which is a deterioration of £5K. The service only refers children to the family court if it is the only way to secure a child's safety and long-term stability / welfare. The costs associated with a court process are high, and the use of barristers is often unavoidable. Court costs were inflated this year because of 2 specific complex cases. In terms of corrective action, the service will continue to liaise with the legal team to explore any potential to reduce the costs associated with court.

Another area of reported overspend relates to pressure that has arisen through a reduction in the Welsh Government grant that supports our Family Support services. This is a current pressure of £332k. Family support is critical to supporting children to remain safely at home wherever possible and helps both to safely reduce the numbers of children who need to come into care and safely return children to their families and communities at the earliest opportunity. Although it represents a cost pressure, the service has maintained family support despite the significant reduction in the WG grant. Family support is fundamental to cost avoidance (particularly given the cost of placements) and helps us to secure best outcomes for children and families. Most children open to children's services (normally around 550 at any one time) will be receiving family support of some description, with many others receiving services through early help and community-based support. If these services were disrupted or reduced more children would need to come into care.

Maintaining family support services at their current level has been put forward as a proposal in the 2026/27 budget.

At update 3 the service is on track to achieve 100% of its £1.9M savings related to practice change in care planning for children and placement development.

The current position is predicated on there being no new high-cost demand into the service, something which is not always predictable.

## **HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
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<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>0</b>
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Housing services is predicting an overspend of £501K, a further deterioration since last update of £135K.

The main salient causes of the continued and worsening overspend remain as:

- the delayed opening of Severn View leading to additional costs within Bed and Breakfast provision plus the need for extra costs once occupied,
- several voids within existing provision,
- costs associated with the maintenance and repair of existing provision,
- making-good following hand-back of Bed and Breakfast provision,
- costs within private leasing arrangements driven by increased repair, maintenance, and cleaning costs,
- reduced income due to rent arrears and bad debt and,
- staffing costs.

These issues are indicative of providing emergency and temporary housing for people who have high support needs. The bottom-line position within housing has benefitted from £254K due to the Housing benefit clawback reduction; however, this has not been sufficient to offset the current costs.

The service is looking at potential mitigating actions including reducing voids where possible. As the new temporary accommodation service in Severn View settles, the plan is this can help alleviate future budgetary pressure, dependant on demand patterns. On a positive note, the usage of B&B accommodation continues at the lowest level for many years.

<b>Public Protection</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

At update 3 the division is forecast to be within £2K of its allocated budget.

<b>SCH Support</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>(121)</b>	<b>0</b>

There is a £121K underspend forecast as a result of delayed recruitment to the Head of Housing and Public Protection. This delayed recruitment has helped to mitigate the budget pressure currently forecast in SCH support due to changes in payroll costings following the Chief officer pay review, changes to employer national insurance contribution rates, and from pay awards.

<b>Learning, Skills &amp; Economy DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>0</b>

**CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY**

The Directorate's current position is a forecasted overspend of £462,350. The increase in deficit since update 2 is due to an increase in pupils accessing ALN bespoke support, which is costly, as we are currently having to use third party providers. During 2026-27, we are planning to open an SEMH (Social & Emotional Mental Health) Provision, which will be able to support these pupils and reduce our costs. School balances have deteriorated further by £449,643 with many schools seeing higher supply costs. All schools that are in a deficit budget have a recovery plan in place and where they are not meeting their recovery plan further challenge is being provided by the Local Authority to understand the reasons and to look at mitigating actions that can be taken to ensure recovery plans are met.

### Economy, Employment & Skills

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

Economy, Employment & Skills are currently reporting an overspend of £7k due to not being able to fully meet employee related savings. We have been able to reduce the overspend since Update 2, by being able to fund some salary costs by a grant.

### Emergency Planning

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>

Emergency Planning are currently reporting an overspend of £16k due to not being able to meet employee related savings.

### Individual Schools Budget

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>(126)</b>	<b>0</b>

The Local Authority funds the actual cost of rates for every school, with King Henry VIII 3 – 19 school opening in April the rates costs were unknown, the actual costs are lower than had been funded and therefore the saving has been taken centrally.

### Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>0</b>

The current forecasted overspend of £112k is due to the following:

- £32k increase in Teacher Pension estimate.
- £65k decrease in Photovoltaic Recharge Income, as solar panels on the schools are not generating as much income as expected.
- £8k increase in staff costs (Support Services), as funding does not fully cover costs.
- £2k increase in School & Student Access staff costs, due to a secondment continuing for the remainder of the financial year, and not being able to meet employee related savings

(this was previously an overspend of £14k at Update 2, but we have been able to use a grant to offset staff costs).

- £6k overspend in the Financial Management Services Team (this was previously £14k due to no longer receiving income for the administration of the EIG and being unable to meet employee related savings, but we have been able to use a grant to offset staff costs).
- -£1k saving on Support Services ICT.

<b>Standards</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>0</b>

The current forecasted overspend of £451k, is due to the following

- £55k increased costs across Expansion of Early Years, as WG are not fully covering the costs of the provision (this was an overspend of £89k at Update 2 but has reduced due to take up not being as high as expected).
- £45k increased catering and staff costs regarding Breakfast Clubs (a further increase of £4k since Update 2).
- £5k increase in ALN Equipment Budget (reduced from £10k at Update 2).
- £22k increase in MOST staff costs, due to absence, and loss of SLA income for Autumn & Spring Terms.
- £42k less ALN Recoupment Income due to pupils either moving from a neighbouring LA to Monmouthshire or leaving Monmouthshire Schools (an increase of £15k since Update 2).
- £427k overspend on the LA IDP and Contingency Pot 2 Budgets due to an increase in pupils requiring support (an increase of £234k since Update 2).
- £26k overspend on ALN Independents Budget, due to increase in pupils accessing ALN Bespoke Support (we had previously forecast an underspend of £311k at Update 2, due to several pupils leaving Independent Placements).
- £12k overspend on ALN Management due to a vacancy being filled on a higher pay band and not being able to meet employee related savings.
- £20k overspend on ALN Administration Services, due to training, software and supply covering an absence (increase of £14k since Update 2).
- £6k overspend on Psychology Service, as unable to fully meet the employee related savings.
- -£78k saving on Out of County, as several of our pupils have left out of county schools.
- -£51k saving on ALN Transport, due to a reduction in Personal Travel Budgets.
- -£80k saving on Early Years, due to grants funding staff costs.

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(61)</b>	<b>(315)</b>	<b>(473)</b>	<b>0</b>

#### **CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY**

The Directorate is forecasting savings of £473k which is an improvement of £158k since the last update. Whilst Storm Claudia has resulted in additional costs these have been offset by corporate energy savings and an uplift in the unit rate for Universal Free School Meals. There have been

adjustments to service budgets as £487k has been transferred from the Waste budget to partially offset overspends in Fleet (£246k) and PTU (£241k).

Underspends are also being realised through improved renewable energy income and staff vacancies and Welsh Government have recently confirmed that the Sustainable Waste Management Grant will be paid for the current financial year.

### Enterprise

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	2	5	(13)	0

The Infrastructure management team is projecting a £13k underspend due to a managed underspend in supplies & services and a part-year staff vacancy. Our forecast for update 2 included the assumption that the Head of Highways post would be filled by January, but this will not now happen until the new financial year and is the reason for the £18k improvement in position.

### Facilities & Fleet

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	563	385	157	0

Facilities and Fleet are forecasting a projecting a £157k overspend, due to:

- **Fleet Maintenance** - £43k overspend – due to in-year pressures including an increase in vehicle maintenance & fuel costs, fleet & pool car hire charges, EVCI maintenance expenses and software costs. There is an improvement in outturn position since update 2 and is due to the reallocation of spare budget from Waste.
- **Passenger Transport** – net £138k overspend – The service is projecting a £223k overspend on external operator costs. This is primarily due to a shortfall against the distance-eligibility saving assumed in the 2025/26 budget, as updated pupil numbers differ from original projections and some routes have subsequently been assessed as unsafe, requiring transport to continue. Additional pressures include growth in PRS contracts, increased costs of pupil season tickets purchased from external operators, and unbudgeted expenditure on external safer walking route assessments. Internal operations is forecasting a £98k overspend, driven by income losses following the return of several contracts due to high sickness levels. These pressures are partially offset by a £51k staffing saving within the regional transport team through capitalising core staff costs, £115k of transport administration grant income, and a £17k increase in Public Transport Subsidy Grant. As with Fleet Maintenance, the improvement in the outturn position since Update 2 reflects the budget reallocation from Waste Services.

### Neighbourhood Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
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<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(381)</b>	<b>(460)</b>	<b>(106)</b>	<b>0</b>
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Neighbourhood services is forecasting to return a £106k underspend, due to :-

- **Waste Services** – Break-even – Waste Services reported a £299k underspend at Update 2, driven mainly by a one-off gain-share receipt from the waste-to-energy partnership, improved income, savings on disposal and recycling contracts, and staff underspends due to vacant posts. Although these efficiencies are still expected to be achieved, DMT has reallocated the available budget to help offset pressures within Passenger Transport and Fleet Maintenance. This reallocation accounts for the adverse movement since Update 2. Welsh Government has now confirmed full allocation of the Sustainable Waste Grant, removing this as a budget risk.
- **Grounds Maintenance** – Break-even – Grounds Maintenance is now forecasting a break-even position. Income projections have been revised down from Update 2, and the service has incurred additional staffing, plant, and material costs in response to Storm Claudia. These pressures were not reflected in the previous forecast and account for the £76k adverse movement.
- **Highways Operations & External Clients** – On Budget
- **Streetlighting** – On Budget
- **Highways Design, Flooding & Road Safety** – £106k net underspend – The service is projecting a net underspend of £106k, primarily due to savings on professional fees, software costs, supplies & services, and staff vacancies across the department. These savings have been partially offset by a £52k increase in flooding related spend including tide watches, sandbagging provision and the recent costs incurred in the response to Storm Claudia.

#### Operations

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(245)</b>	<b>(245)</b>	<b>(511)</b>	<b>0</b>

Operations are forecasting to underspend by £511k, due to:

- **Schools Catering** - £214k underspend – driven by part year staffing savings, increased Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) income, and reduced supplies and services expenditure. The £126k increase in the underspend since Update 2 reflects a £97k rise in UFSM income following the Welsh Government's £.20p per meal uplift to £3.40 from September (this was not known until December), a £9k reduction in forecast ingredient costs due to a higher take-up of the lower-cost snack option (jacket potato) over the main meal option, and £20k of additional staffing savings arising from continued vacancies and some posts being held pending confirmation of required staffing levels. The unit is projected to serve 791,000 meals by year end, with current take up averaging around 71% (average take up was 58% before introduction of UFSM). Ingredient cost is currently £1.03 per meal.
- **Decarbonisation** - £173k underspend – driven by improved income from the solar farm and wider renewables portfolio because of higher ROC rates, favourable weather conditions, and improved inverter performance. Additional savings have arisen from a part-year staffing

vacancy within the team. These benefits are offset by a £102k pressure relating to a prior-year corporate mileage saving, the pool car scheme is due to become operational in March, although it will not generate material savings in the current financial year.

- **Corporate Energy Saving** - £123k underspend – latest projections indicate that our energy costs will be £123k below budget due to reduced consumption during the year, figures were not finalised until recently, so this underspend was not factored in at update 2.

<b>PLACE &amp; COMMUNITY WELLBEING</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>(21)</b>	<b>(83)</b>	<b>0</b>

### **CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY**

The Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate is presently forecasting an underspend £83k. This favourable variance is principally attributable to increased income generation within Leisure and Wellbeing along with reduced expenditure within our Countryside, Destination and Environment services as well as the delayed recruitment to vacant posts, which has helped to offset pressures arising from the under-recovery of parking penalty charges, planning fees and building control fees.

The directorate continues to closely monitor areas exposed to income volatility and has proactively implemented mitigation strategies wherever feasible to strengthen the financial position since update 2.

The variance from update 2 to 3 is largely a result of higher than anticipated expenditure due to storm Claudia in particular increased staff costs, reduced income within car parks due to free parking in December and damage to our pay and display machines. A reduction in the level of predicted planning fees due to one large planning application being delayed until 26-27 £65,000. This has been more than offset by continued growth within our leisure income, improvements in sports development, play and outdoor adventure and deferred filling of vacant positions, all of which have contributed to the overall positive outcome.

### **Culture and Community Learning**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>

The Culture and Community Learning division is projected to experience an overspend of £18k. This is primarily due to higher than budgeted staffing costs, inflationary pressures and increased expenses relating to supplies and services contracts.

### **Countryside, Destination and Environment**

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(36)</b>	<b>(61)</b>	<b>0</b>

The Countryside, Destination and Environment division is forecast to underspend by £61k primarily due to income exceeding budget because of increased grants. The positive variance between

update 2 and update 3 is attributable to the Destination Managers post becoming vacant. Recruitment to this post is underway but this is unlikely to be completed until after year end, the section will therefore see a financial benefit from this vacancy.

### Leisure and Wellbeing

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	0	(2)	(200)	0

The Leisure and Wellbeing division expects to underspend by £200k, as higher income from leisure facilities has offset the £89k loss of income due to Abergavenny LC's closure and reduced service agreement income. Quarter 3 has seen the deployment of our annual membership campaign which again has seen high success rate increasing forecasted income, Outdoor Adventure, sports development and play have also seen a substantial improvement in quarter 3 contributing to the overall improved position between update 2 and update 3.

### Performance, Finance and Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	(5)	(80)	(174)	0

The Performance, Finance and Resources division is forecasting to underspend by £174k due to staff vacancies. The variance from update 2 to update 3 relates to the delayed implementation of the support services restructure.

### Placemaking, Highways & Flooding

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	123	78	333	0

The Placemaking, Highways and Flooding division is forecasting to overspend by £255k due to:

- **Development Management and Building Control** – The section is forecasting an overspend of **£127k**, relating to under-recovery of building control fees and increased software costs. Along with lower than anticipated planning fees in particular the delay in one substantial planning application (£65k) until 26-27 has seen an adverse impact on previously forecast income.
- **Planning Policy** – This section is currently on budget. Spending levels will be closely monitored and aligned with the approval of the RDLP.
- **Highways Development and Car Parks** – The section is forecast to overspend by £206k. This is due to the under recovery of fixed penalty charges, filling of previously vacant posts, higher than anticipated publication costs associated with the implementation of the new fees and charges. The adverse variance between update 2 and update 3 relates to increased maintenance costs of £30k to replace damaged pay and display machines due to storm Claudia, free carparking in December as a response to Storm Claudia and an overall downturn in pay and display income.

- **Strategic Projects** – This area is currently on budget.

PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE & PARTNERSHIPS	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	99	48	6	0

### CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

People, Performance & Partnerships and the Chief Executives Office are forecasting a combined overspend by £6k. There remains a degree of risk associated with the implementation of changes to the Welsh language translation service, which are scheduled for completion in the second half of the financial year.

Within the CEO's Office, the overall forecast reflects a mixed financial position. Overspends are primarily driven by staffing pressures and reduction in income. Whilst some overspends are offset by other service area underspends, pressures persist and officers will continue to seek mitigation strategies as the year progresses.

#### Chief Executives Office

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	117	48	35	0

The Chief Executives Office is currently forecasting an overspend of £35k. The principal factors contributing to this position are as follows:

- **Communications - £60k overspend** – The overspend is primarily attributable to a budget pressure of £56k arising from the creation of the Head of Communications and Active Travel post, coupled with a reduction in active travel income of £25k. These pressures have been partially offset by a contribution from Welsh Government relating to the secondment of the Head of Communications.
- **Contact Centre - £50k underspend** – An underspend has been achieved due to system and licence spend coming in below budgeted levels.
- **Strategic Change & Programme Assurance - £8k underspend** – The underspend is due to the capitalisation of the change management program.
- **Libraries, Hubs, and Community Learning** – This area is forecast to **underspend by £14k**, with no significant variances expected.
- **Procurement - £45k overspend** – The overspend is due to higher than anticipated contract costs.

#### People

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
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<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(30)</b>	<b>0</b>
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The People sections is forecasting an underspend of 30k for the financial year. The principal factors contributing to this position area as follows: -

- **Organisational Development & Training- £10k overspend** – The overspend is attributable to staff costs exceeding budget, primarily due to the inability to achieve vacancy factor savings offset by a small saving within the training budget.
- **Payroll & System Support - £113k underspend** – An underspend has been achieved as a result of a reduction in system and supplies & services expenditure of £36k alongside net staff saving of £78k arising from changes in hours and a payroll technician post being held vacant.
- **People Management - £51k overspend** – Additional costs have been incurred due to unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity.
- **Occupational Health - £23k Overspend** – due to increased demand

#### Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Services is forecasting to overspend by £1k, broken down as follows:

- **Corporate - £32k overspend** – mainly due to the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings, SLT Pay award and an increase in subscription costs.
- **Scrutiny and Customer Complaints - £6k overspend** – unable to achieve staff vacancy savings.
- **GIS - £24k underspend** – saving in system and supplies & services spend.
- **Levies & Subscriptions - £36k overspend** – corporate subscription costs (WLGA, LGA) have exceeded available budget, in addition the authority has made the decision to renew the membership of New Local causing a further pressure as this budget was removed as part of 25/26 budget savings.
- **Performance & Data - £29k underspend** – due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.
- **Equalities & Welsh Language - £3k overspend** – the authority is due to enter a new translation SLA with Torfaen, discussions are ongoing around implementation timescales.
- **Community Safety – Net £23k Underspend**– due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.

<b>LAW &amp; GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0</b>

#### CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

Law & Governance is forecasting a £76k overspend, an increase of £7k since Update 2. The variance is mainly due to staffing pressures, by-election costs and income shortfalls across service areas. Officers will continue to explore measures to mitigate deficit before year-end.

### Democratic Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	39	27	28	0

Democratic services is forecasting to overspend by £28k, this is due to:

- **Members** - £43k overspend – primarily due to staffing where there is an overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges.
- **Committee & Election services** - £15k underspend – due to staff savings from part year vacancies and grant support for an apprentice post in Elections, this has been partially offset by an overspend in by-election costs.

### Legal and Land Charges

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	25	42	48	0

Legal & Land Charges is forecasting to overspend by £48k, due to:

- **Legal** - £64k overspend – This is due to a projected reduction in fee income and the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings.
- **Land Charges** - £16k underspend – due to savings from a vacant part-time post.

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	(95)	(145)	(151)	0

### CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Resources Directorate is forecasting a £151k underspend at Update 3, a small improvement on the previous period. This reflects strong vacancy management across several areas, alongside targeted control of non-pay costs.

Despite pressures with investment properties Landlord Services are forecasting an under spend of £118k. These pressures stem mainly from unoccupied units and associated running costs and are more than offset by vacancy savings ahead of a wider staff restructure.

While Benefits and Council Tax show overspends due to increased bad-debt provisions and service pressures, these are balanced by strong vacancy savings, reduced non-pay costs, and modest grant income.

Overall, the directorate remains in a stable financial position, with most pressures mitigated through vacancy management, active cost control, and ongoing recovery work in commercial estates to reduce vacant units. One remaining risk as the directorate approaches year-end is a level of significant arrears accrued by a commercial tenant. Negotiations are ongoing with the aim

of reaching agreement around the recovery of arrears and the tenant securing a viable and sustainable way forward. Consideration will need to be given at year-end to a prudent level of bad debt provision.

### Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	(27)	(151)	(118)	0

Commercial, Corporate and Landlord services is forecasting to underspend by £118k, due to:

- **Investment Properties** - £121k overspend, due to:
  - **Newport Leisure Park** - £28k overspend – NLP is projecting a surplus of £295k in 25/26, however this is £28k below budget due to unbudgeted costs (such as electricity and rates) associated with a vacant unit. There is potential for this position to improve if a tenant can be found for the unit before year end.
  - **Castlegate Business Park** - £93k overspend – primarily due to increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage, including higher-than-expected rates, electricity charges, and one-off fees. As above there is potential for this position to improve if tenants can be found before year end.
- **Landlord Services** – £292k underspend – mainly due to staffing savings arising from in-year vacancies. Staff consultation is shortly to commence for a proposed restructure which would re-establish capacity, strengthening the ability to generate financial returns and placing the department on a sustainable footing to deliver the Council’s Asset Management Strategy. Recruitment of two vacant managerial posts are anticipated in March. Update 2 had assumed the two managers posts would be filled by January, and this later recruitment timeline is the principal driver of the increased underspend. These savings are partly offset by a shortfall in rental income.
- **County Farms** - £77k overspend - Mainly due to void property costs of £68k from covering the running costs of vacant farms and cottages, which aren't included in the base budget (this issue is expected to resolve next year as a farm has been re-let and cottage disposals are being considered), and an increase in professional fees of £20k due to increased demand for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management. These have partially been offset by improved income of £8k.
- **Cemeteries** – £21k under spend primarily due to savings on supplies and services. There is potential that this could change if any unforeseen repairs or emergency tree works are required between now and year-end.
- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences** - £37k underspend – driven by staffing vacancies, along with savings on maintenance and business rates for public conveniences. This represents an £87k adverse movement from Update 2 due to additional agency and overtime costs required to cover staff shortages, which had not been fully reflected in the previous forecast.
- **Property Services** – £6k overspend – Pressures from maintenance and business rates within office accommodation, along with a shortfall in external fee income, have been largely offset by employee underspends resulting from managed staff vacancies.

<b>Corporate Health &amp; Safety</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Corporate Health & Safety** – Break Even – No change from update 2 - all costs incurred in response to directorate H&S matters will be accommodated from within services and reported as part of their outturn position.

<b>Finance</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus) '000s</b>	<b>(58)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>0</b>

The Finance division is forecasting to under spend by £11k, this is mainly due to:

- **Revenues, Systems & Exchequer** - £45k net overspend:
  - **Benefits** - £53k overspend - Housing Benefit Subsidy is currently forecast to overspend by £76k and the bad debt provision is estimated to increase by £30k, reflecting current caseload and debts. These pressures are partially offset by a reduction in non pay costs and additional grant income totalling £53k.
  - **Council Tax** - £32k overspend – The overspend comprises £19k of additional service running costs, an £11k increase in the bad debt provision for unpaid court costs and £2k of unmet vacancy-factor savings. These pressures are partially offset by £12k of one-off Welsh Government grant income for administering this year's Retail Rate Relief scheme.
  - **Charity Relief** - £4k underspend – projections indicate that 25/26 awards will be lower than budget.
  - **Debtors** - £6k overspend - Unmet vacancy factor savings and additional National Insurance costs.
  - **Cashiers** - £14k underspend – Although card payment fees are projected to overspend by £21k due to increased card-based transactions, these additional costs are more than offset by savings from reduced security carrier charges, deferring system development work, and temporarily holding a cashier vacancy. The increased underspend since Update 2 reflects a revised, lower estimate of card payment fees based on current activity levels.
  - **Revenues System Administration** - £18k overspend - no change from update 2, primarily due to increased annual contract costs for the Northgate system.
  - **Financial Systems Support & Vat** - £46k underspend – £25k saving resulting from vacant posts plus a £11k saving against the non pay budget and £10k additional recharge income. The underspend has increased by £11k since update 2 due to an additional vacancy and lower than initially anticipated consultancy costs for the Business World System upgrade.

- **Finance** - £56k under spent - due to part year staff vacancies and the reallocation of core staff costs to council tax.

### Information, Communication & Technology

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>(18)</b>	<b>(21)</b>	<b>0</b>

The ICT division is forecasting to underspend by £21k, this is due to:

- **SRS & Digital Programme Office** – £4k underspend - The latest information from SRS indicates a £2k overspend on the service contribution, driven by increased costs for O365 licences and PSBA line rentals. However, this pressure has been fully offset by a managed underspend on supplies and equipment, resulting in a net underspend of £4k within the section.
- **Digital, Design & Innovation** – On budget – No Change from Update 2 - As of August 2025, the team moved under the Shared Resource Service (SRS) via the Cabinet-approved Digital, Data and Technology agreement. This caused a forecasted £33,000 overspend due to higher collaboration costs, exceeding the current budget. In line with Cabinet's decision, this shortfall will be covered by the IT reserve, so there is no negative effect on the Directorate's overall financial position in 25-26, with future funding being built in as part of the 26-27 budget proposals.
- **Cyber Security Partnership** - £12k underspend – no change from update 2 - the Cyber Security Partnership has now transferred to SRS (from 1st September 2025), early projections indicate an in-year underspend of £12,000 due to vacancy savings.
- **Telephony** - £6k underspend – no change from update 2 – saving due to a reduction in call charges.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>0</b>

### Coroners

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0</b>

Final levy is expected to be higher than budgeted due to additional requirements of the services following Chief Coroner review.

### Precepts & Levies

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>0</b>

Forecast saving due to the South Wales Fire Service precept being lower than originally anticipated for the financial year.

#### Archives

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	0	0	0	0

No variance forecast

#### Corporate Management

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	(13)	(67)	(62)	0

Unbudgeted income that cannot be attributed to services

#### Non-Distributed Costs

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	0	0	0	0

No variance forecast

#### Strategic Initiatives

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	0	761	571	0

Funding shortfall in relation to increased employer's national insurance contributions. The final funding allocation received from Welsh Government was considerably short of the increased costs incurred.

#### Insurance

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	0	0	0	0

No variance forecast

#### TREASURY & RESERVES

Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	486	541	(43)	0

#### Interest & Investment Income

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit/(Surplus) '000s	(257)	(257)	(410)	0

Cash balances have further increased since update 2 while investment rate return hasn't reduced at the expected rate. The subsequent increase in investment income has increased the underspend to £409k.

### Interest Payable & Similar Charges

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>0</b>

The authorities borrowing requirement has been less than expected reducing borrowing costs. These have further been reduced due to the authority utilising advantageous rates when available. This has reduced the overspend to £135k.

### Charges Required Under Regulation

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(215)</b>	<b>(215)</b>	<b>(144)</b>	<b>0</b>

Capital slippage funded from borrowing was higher than anticipated at the end of the previous year which has resulted in lower than anticipated charges. Underspend has decreased due to disposal of vehicles in year resulting in additional MRP charges being made. The adverse movement is matched by an increase in underspend against borrowing recoupment.

### Other Investment Income

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>0</b>

Minor income received. Slightly increased from Update 2.

### Borrowing Cost Recoupment

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>(102)</b>	<b>0</b>

The underspend is due to several vehicles being disposed of in year and all remaining borrowing charges being made in year. This underspend is offset by an increase in charges required under regulation.

### Contributions to / from Reserves

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>0</b>

An unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast and has increased since update 1. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within Council tax.

FINANCING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(1,185)</b>	<b>(1,205)</b>	<b>(980)</b>	<b>0</b>

### Council Tax Reduction Scheme

<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(400)</b>	<b>(420)</b>	<b>(500)</b>	<b>0</b>
Anticipated underspend as in year caseloads are lower than the budget set, a continuing trend throughout the year.				
<b>Council Tax</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>(785)</b>	<b>(785)</b>	<b>(480)</b>	<b>0</b>
The tax base for the year has been met and continues to increase. However since update 2 there has been a significant upward shift in the number of properties awarded an exemption or discount. This is partly as a result of the recent floods which have rendered some properties uninhabitable and requiring significant remedial works. The Council Tax Premium collection rate for 2024/25 is currently at 76%, which is higher than anticipated when the budget was set. The downward shift since update 2 reflects adjustments to in year premiums applied to rate accounts as ratepayer circumstances change.				
<b>General Government Grants</b>				
<b>Outturn Forecast</b>	<b>Update 1</b>	<b>Update 2</b>	<b>Update 3</b>	<b>Update 4</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b> <b>'000s</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
No Variance forecast				

## 2. School Balances

- 2.1. A Board of Governors who are responsible for managing the school's finances, directly governs each of the Authority's Schools. However, the Authority also holds a key responsibility for monitoring the overall financial performance of schools. Below is a table showing the forecast Schools' balances position, for each Educational Cluster.

Cluster	(A) Opening (Surplus) / Deficit 2025/26	(B) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 1	(C) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 2	(D) Draw / (Contribution) @ Update 3	(A+D) Closing (Surplus) / Deficit 2025/26
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Abergavenny	1,351	635	817	1,025	2,375
Caldicot	(37)	641	826	866	829
Chepstow	989	26	(27)	139	1,127
Monmouth	144	407	392	433	578
Special	1,645	1,126	961	963	2,608
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,092</b>	<b>2,835</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>3,426</b>	<b>7,517</b>

2.2. Collective School balances at the beginning of the Financial Year amounted to a deficit of £4,091,578. The anticipated further draw on reserves at Update 1 was £2,834,735, against a budgeted draw on reserves of £2,714,668, which resulted in a forecast deficit balance of £6,926,313 by year end. At Update 3, the draw on reserves has increased to £3,426,138, resulting in a forecast deficit balance of £7,517,453 by year end.

2.3. The movement of individual schools forecast to be in deficit at the end of the year is shown below:

Start of year	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
<b>Total: 15</b>	<b>Total: 18</b>	<b>Total: 18</b>	<b>Total: 19</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
KHS VIII 3-19	KHS VIII 3-19	KHS VIII 3-19	King Henry VIII 3-19	
Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern	Gilwern	
Our Lady & St Michael's				
Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni	
Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	Caldicot School	
Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet	Rogiet	
Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin	
Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow School	Chepstow School	
The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	The Dell	
Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell	Thornwell	
Kymin View		Kymin View	Kymin View	
Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston	Osbaston	

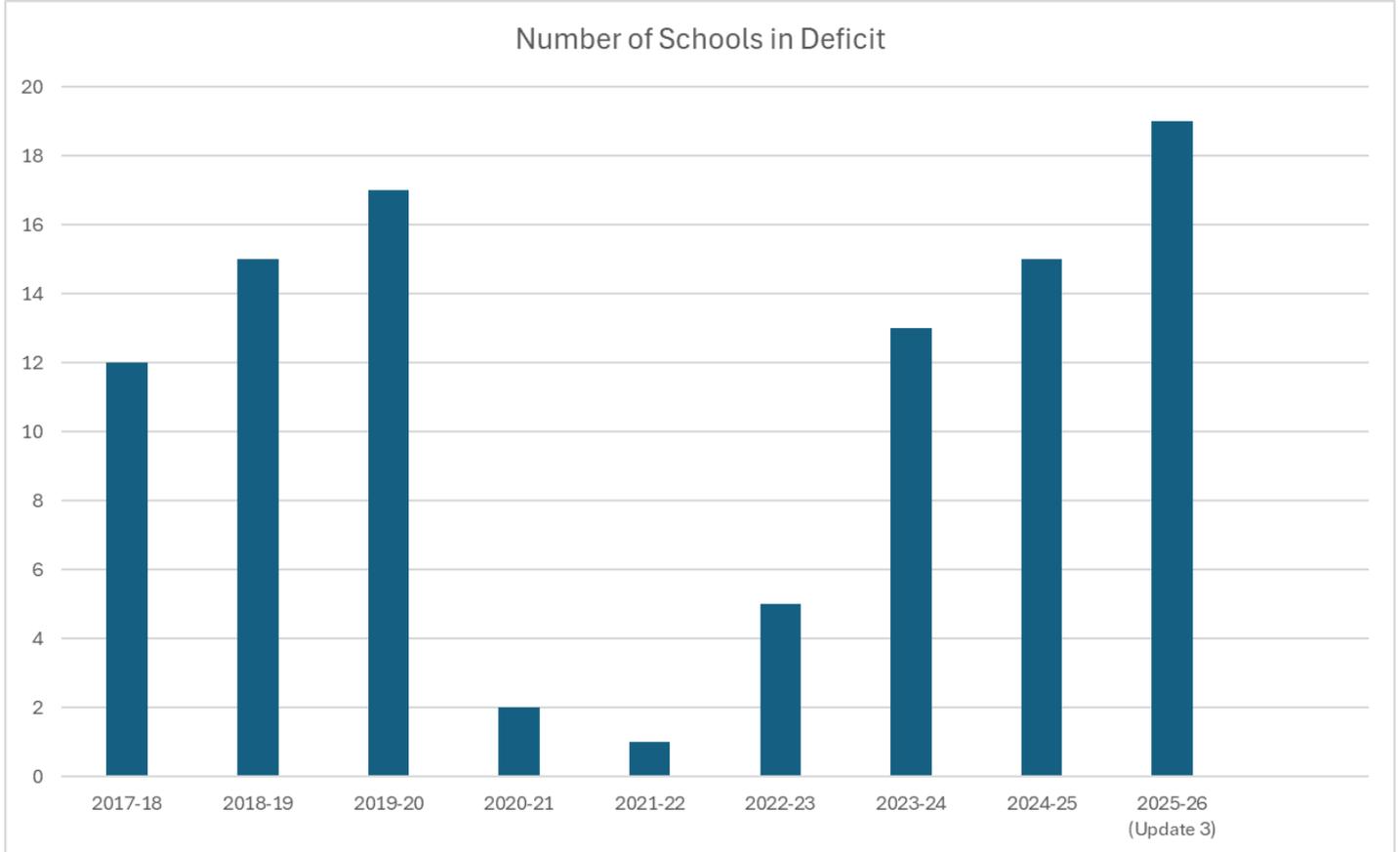
Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	Overmonnow	
Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy	
PRS	PRS	PRS	PRS	
	Castle Park	Castle Park	Castle Park	
	Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive	
	Cross Ash	Cross Ash	Cross Ash	
	Llandogo			

- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. All schools with a deficit budget must agree a recovery plan with the Local Authority, this plan will set out clear actions that the school and Governing Body must take to see the school to return to a surplus. These plans are monitored on a frequent basis and where schools do not meet their recovery plans further challenge is provided by the Local Authority to understand the reasons and to look at mitigating actions to bring plans back on track. The majority of the deficit (75%) relates to three schools, King Henry VIII 3 – 19 School, Chepstow School and the Pupil Referral Service, all three of these schools are a focus of support and challenge from the Local Authority to ensure budgets return to a surplus within the agreed recovery plan timeframe.

<b>Financial Year-end</b>	<b>Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's</b>
2015-16	(1,156)
2016-17	(269)
2017-18	(175)
2018-19	232
2019-20	435
2020-21	(3,418)
2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23	(4,257)
2023-24	904

2024-25	4,092
2025-26 (forecast)	7,517

2.6. The decrease in school balances has resulted in an increase in the number of schools in deficit, as illustrated in the following table:



### 3. Forecast Capital Budget Outturn

3.1 The summary Capital forecast outturn position at Update 3 is as follows:

Category	Slippage B/F	Original Budget	Budget Adjustments	Slippage to 2025/26	Revised Budget 2025/26	Forecast Outturn	Over / (Under) spend
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
<b>Expenditure</b>							

Capitalisation Directive	63	3,708	0	0	3,770	3,770	0
Development Schemes Over £250k	9,083	730	1,354	(6,097)	5,069	5,069	0
Development Schemes Under £250k	1,955	90	0	(1,357)	688	687	(1)
School modernisation programme	33	12,282	277	(2,608)	9,984	9,984	0
Infrastructure	3,958	6,076	829	(3,442)	7,421	7,421	0
ICT Schemes	272	463	(24)	(98)	612	617	6
Property Maintenance	2,016	2,659	579	(200)	5,054	3,754	(1,300)
Renovation Grants	192	900	341	(300)	1,132	1,132	0
LCHO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Section 106	1,454	288	0	(771)	970	970	0
Regeneration - Specific Grant Funded	6,009	500	15,574	(6,143)	15,939	15,899	(40)
Vehicles	0	1,500	0	0	1,500	1,500	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>25,033</b>	<b>29,195</b>	<b>18,929</b>	<b>(21,017)</b>	<b>52,139</b>	<b>50,803</b>	<b>(1,335)</b>
<b>Financing</b>							
Supported Borrowing	0	(2,432)	(103)	0	(2,535)	(2,535)	0
General Capital Grant	0	(3,046)	0	0	(3,046)	(3,046)	0
Grants and Contributions	(8,860)	0	(19,103)	6,840	(21,123)	(21,083)	40
S106 Contributions	(1,621)	(288)	0	771	(1,137)	(1,137)	0
Unsupported Borrowing	(13,661)	(18,069)	253	12,841	(18,635)	(17,335)	1,300
Earmarked Reserve & Revenue Funding	(272)	(103)	24	248	(103)	(108)	(5)
Capital Receipts	(619)	(3,758)	0	317	(4,059)	(4,059)	0
Leasing	0	(1,500)	0	0	(1,500)	(1,500)	0
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>(25,033)</b>	<b>(29,195)</b>	<b>(18,929)</b>	<b>21,017</b>	<b>(52,139)</b>	<b>(50,803)</b>	<b>1,335</b>

3.2 The capital expenditure forecasted at outturn demonstrates a net underspend £1,335,000 due to the following schemes:

Scheme	Budget £000's	Over / (Under) spend £000's	
IT Schemes	612	6	Forecast business world upgrade over spend. Alternative funding or minor under spends currently be sought to offset.
Grant Schemes	15,939	(40)	Minor under spends across numerous grant funded schemes where final costs were below initial estimates. This will not result in any useable funding being available for other schemes.
Property Maintenance	5,054	(1,300)	Capital contingency budget of £1.3m is to be released to fund 2026/27 capital investment in line with draft budget proposals

### 3.3 Capital Slippage

3.4 Capital slippage forecast for the year is forecast to be £21.017 million. The principal schemes reporting slippage are:

<b>Scheme Category</b>	<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Slippage £000's</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Specific Grant Funded	Chepstow Transport Hub & Connectivity Improvements	5,208	Multi-year scheme, to be completed by end of March 2028.
Development schemes	Capital City Region	2,678	Confirmation awaited from SEWCJC of future capital funding profile.
Education Development	King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	2,608	School remedial works to be completed by August 2026.
Infrastructure	Wye Bridge Monmouth works	2,166	Design / Survey stage progressing, main construction works 2026/27.
Development schemes	Asset Investment Fund	1,781	Budget remains available as required to support any requirement for further capital investment at existing commercial investment sites.
Social Care development Schemes	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	1,540	Acquisition of properties as and when suitable sites become available – dependant on supply.
Development schemes	Housing Provision Borrowing Headroom	773	Further housing purchases are unlikely to complete in 2025/26 – dependant on supply.
Specific Grant Funded	Grant –Match Funding Support Allocation	611	Funding has not been required to match any schemes to date in 2025/26. Full requirement for slippage will be assessed at year-end
Infrastructure	Reconstruction of Bridges & Retaining Walls	362	Funding required for Chainbridge Refurbishment - construction works for diversion routes need to be undertaken before the bridge is closed for refurbishment.
Infrastructure	Carriageway improvements - additional	340	Inclement weather has delayed planned highways refurbishment works
Renovation Grants	Disabled Facilities Grants (Private)	300	New procurement rules, extended lead times for works and increased pressure on housing surveyor are leading to an impact on delivery timelines. Slippage to ensure completion of planned committed adaptations.
Infrastructure	Carriageway Resurfacing - Various	245	Inclement weather has delayed planned resurfacing works
Development schemes	Shire Hall/Monmouth Museum Move	234	Multi-year project due for completion in 2026/27.

<b>Scheme Category</b>	<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Slippage £000's</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Infrastructure	Clydach Gateway Reinstatement and Devil's Bridge Associated Works A465	229	Scheme ongoing but now due for completion in 2026/27 following external factors.
Maintenance Schemes	County Farms Maintenance & Reinvestment	200	Funding required in 26/27 for refurbishment of two vacant cottages and other estate works. Works dependant on need.
Specific Grant Funded	Placemaking Grant programme	170	Delays due to sub-contractor work commitments
Development schemes	Solar Farm Development Cost	150	Initial feasibility works have yet to be progressed.
Development schemes	Depots – Feasibility works: Transport Depot South of County	149	Ongoing site evaluations are in progress but slightly behind schedule.
Specific Grant Funded	HLF Woodland Investment Grant	123	Slippage due to grant spending profile conditions
Infrastructure	Wye Bridge Chepstow works	100	Works to finish in 2026/27.
Development schemes	Decarbonisation Investment	98	Delay to planned de-carbonisation works in energy management systems.
Social Care development Schemes	Social Care Case Management System Replacement	98	To support Social Care Case management software implementation depending on final costs.
Development schemes	Fixed Asset disposal costs	51	Surplus assets are being assessed for disposal in 2026/27 – dependant on need.
Specific Grant Funded	Brilliant Basics Fund – WG- Tintern Welcome	31	Assessments being undertaken
Section 106 Schemes	Various S106 Schemes	771	Various community recreational improvement schemes are delayed mainly due to external factors.
<b>Total</b>		<b>21,017</b>	

### 3.5 Useable Capital Receipts Available

3.6 The table below outlines the latest forecast of capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments. Whilst overall balances remain healthy, it should be noted that all banked capital receipts have been committed to funding the indicative forward capital programme. Any further use will be dependent upon forecast capital receipts being realised.

<b>Capital receipt balances</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>
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	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	6,083	4,627	4,430	3,474	2,819
Capital receipts used for financing	(289)	(367)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,770)	(2,708)	(1,708)	(708)	0
Capital receipts Received	2,500	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,878	803	103	103
<b>Forecast Balance as at 31st March</b>	<b>4,627</b>	<b>4,430</b>	<b>3,474</b>	<b>2,819</b>	<b>2,871</b>

### Appendix 3 - Budget savings progress

	Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance	% Met	
		£000	£000	£000		
	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,843)	107	96.4%	
	Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100.0%	
	Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,185)	494	91.3%	
	Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(531)	75	87.6%	
	People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	
	Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100.0%	
	Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100.0%	
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>(10,701)</b>	<b>(9,964)</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>93.1%</b>	

Ref	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
SCH S2	Community Meals - cost neutral or cease	(15)	(15)	0		
SCH S3	Adults Practice Change	(250)	(313)	(63)		Full assessment has been made at update 3 which indicates slight out-performance of target
SCH S4	Fees and Charges	(336)	(336)	0		
SCH S5	Public protection Workforce reduction	(100)	(100)	0		
SCH S6	Wedding fees (registrars)	(30)	(30)	0		
SCH S7	Childrens Practice Change	(1,887)	(1,887)	0		
SCH S10	Adults workforce review	(125)	(125)	0		

C&P S20	Savings driven from the reduction of B&B usage and full year effect of Severn View	(207)	(37)	170		Saving assumed Severn View would be open from 1st April, but due to building delays tenants did not move in fully until early August - this meant we had to incur 4 months of additional of B&B costs that were not budgeted. This has been mitigated in part by the overall use of B&B reducing over and above the target set.
<b>Total</b>	<b>Social Care, Health &amp; Safeguarding</b>	<b>(2,950)</b>	<b>(2,843)</b>	<b>107</b>		

Ref	Learning, Skills and Economy	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
CYP S1	Reduce 0.6 FTE Most (Monmouthshire Specialist Teachers) team	(40)	(40)	0		
CYP S3	Grant funding increase to meet costs of EWS post	(51)	(51)	0		EWS has not been reduced by 1 FTE, a grant funding increase was able to meet the costs of the EWS post
CYP S4	Bring ALN MCC pupils from OOC back to MCC	(100)	(100)	0		
CYP S5	KH8 Maintenance costs	(40)	(40)	0		
C&P S21	Youth Service - Passport more core service costs to grant funding.	(45)	(45)	0		
C&P S14	Reduction in utility costs for education estate	(429)	(429)	0		
ML S4	Reduction in Youth Service Provision (delete 1 FTE post)	(40)	(40)	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>Learning, Skills and Economy</b>	<b>(745)</b>	<b>(745)</b>	<b>0</b>		

Ref	Infrastructure	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
C&P S4	Passenger Transport Commissioning - We revert to the statutory distances of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary - Subject to political approval - will commence from 01/09/2025	(447)	(113)	334		Numbers have changed since original projections were prepared and some routes have been deemed unsafe meaning transport still has to be provided to pupils impacting on the amount of saving achievable.
C&P S7	Savings in C&P senior Mgt costs as a result of SLT restructure	(170)	(170)	0		Achieved - restructure completed - posts deleted.
C&P S8	Grass routes - Introduce an annual £10 membership charge for users	(3)	(3)	0		Achieved
C&P S9	Reduce gritter fleet by extending the working hours of each vehicle	(20)	(20)	0		Fleet reduced - achieved
C&P S10	Reduction in utility prices for the corporate estate	(136)	(136)	0		Early year projections are indicating that this saving will be achieved.
C&P S11	Undertake energy audit of invoices to identify discrepancies and potential savings	(20)	(20)	0		Currently in process of appointing firm to undertake audit - assume achievable.
C&P S22	PTU Increase the cost of concessionary season tickets by 10%	(6)	(6)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S23	Increase in Highways fee income to external clients to reflect recovery of pay award and inflation.	(52)	(52)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S24	Indicative EPR funding	(4,825)	(4,665)	160		Final award was confirmed to be £160k under original figure - this has been managed by other savings within the service.
<b>Total</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>(5,679)</b>	<b>(5,185)</b>	<b>494</b>		

Ref	Place & Community Wellbeing	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
ML S1	Borough Theatre - Reduced production days (3 days a week)	(50)	(50)	0		
ML S5	Increase Income across the four Leisure Centres	(150)	(150)	0		
ML S7	Lease Old Station Tintern	(30)	(30)	0		
ML S9	Externalise Markets Waste Collection	(20)	(20)	0		
ML S13	S106 - Increase office time recharge	(24)	(24)	0		
ML S14	Rights of way - Charge officer time to capital	(20)	(20)	0		
C&P S2	Request to WG to increase statutory planning application fees by 25% - Consultation Autumn - potential uplift for 1st April or 1st October	(100)	(25)	75		Fees will be uplifted from 1st December 2025
C&P S3	Increase car park fees by 10%	(180)	(180)	0		Carparking fees have been increased and delivering the saving the income pressure declared
C&P S15	Increase Building Control Fees	(32)	(32)	0		Fees have been uplifted.
<b>Total</b>	<b>Place &amp; Community Wellbeing</b>	<b>(606)</b>	<b>(531)</b>	<b>75</b>		

Ref	People, Performance and Partnerships	Budgeted Saving	Update 3 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		

CEO S2	Welsh Language translation	(82)	(82)	0		Entered SLA with Torfaen in October - current forecasts project that this saving will be achieved.
CEO S4	New staffing model in Systems and Payroll	(22)	(22)	0		Achieved
CEO S5	Implement Apprentice First approach	(8)	0	8		Currently no progress on this initiative - further update to be provided at Update 3
CEO S8	End membership of New Local from June 2025	(15)	0	15		Not achieved - decision made by senior leadership to continue with membership.
ML S12	Phase 2 - Restructure	(38)	0	38		Not Achievable
<b>Total</b>	<b>People, Performance and Partnerships</b>	<b>(165)</b>	<b>(104)</b>	<b>61</b>		

Page 56 Ref	<b>Legal &amp; Governance</b>	<b>Budgeted Saving</b>	<b>Update 3 Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		
	LG S1	(1)	(1)	0		Achieved
	<b>Total</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>0</b>		

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Budgeted Saving</b>	<b>Update 3 Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>		<b>Comment</b>
		<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>		
RES S1	Cease our Cyber Security Insurance provision	(98)	(98)	0		Achieved - insurance cover has ceased.
C&P S13	Building Cleaning - Release of recurrent service saving	(20)	(20)	0		Achieved

RES S3	Freeze/Remove Head of Digital, Design & Innovation Post (Net of cover/honoraria arrangements)	(64)	(64)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
RES S5	Finance - HB penalty will reduce as Severn view comes online and temporary accommodation reduces	(250)	(250)	0		Reduction in B&B usage down to 5 has had a beneficial impact on reducing the HB subsidy penalty - forecasts project that this saving will be made in full.
RES S6	Finance - HB penalty reduction as a result of a further reduction in the remaining B&B portfolio.	(100)	(100)	0		
RES S7	Reduction in Chief officer admin Support (0.6 FTE)	(23)	(23)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
<b>Total</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>(555)</b>	<b>(555)</b>	<b>0</b>		

Appendix 4 - Forecast movement in school balances

	Opening Reserves 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit Update 3	Forecast closing Reserves 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	Risk Category
<b>Abergavenny cluster</b>				
King Henry V111 3-19 School	1,386,169	787,060	2,173,229	
Cantref Primary School	(101,495)	11,910	(89,585)	
Gilwern Primary School	15,717	65,526	81,243	
Goytre Fawr Primary School	(43,645)	33,828	(9,817)	
Llanfoist Fawr Primary School	(87,620)	72,226	(15,394)	
Llantillio Pertholey CiW Primary School (VC)	(74,764)	65,713	(9,051)	
Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School	(83,609)	24,598	(59,011)	
Our Lady and St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	53,889	(1,346)	52,543	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	286,080	(34,429)	251,651	
<b>Caldicot cluster</b>				
Caldicot School	267,256	436,110	703,366	
Archbishop Rowan Williams CiW Primary School (VA)	(82,144)	40,851	(41,293)	
Castle Park Primary School	(18,741)	80,798	62,057	
Dewstow Primary School	(6,305)	(30,667)	(36,972)	
Durand Primary School	(93,396)	34,174	(59,222)	
Magor CiW Primary School (VA)	(206,124)	18,743	(187,381)	
Rogiet Primary School	169,213	72,644	241,857	
Undy Primary School	(142,211)	89,814	(52,397)	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	75,216	123,873	199,089	
<b>Chepstow cluster</b>				
Chepstow School	1,130,990	(87,098)	1,043,892	
Pembroke Primary School	(268,044)	36,667	(231,377)	
Shirenewton Primary School	(130,917)	53,655	(77,262)	
St Mary's Chepstow RC Primary School (VA)	(70,363)	68,854	(1,509)	
The Dell Primary School	158,181	16,395	174,576	
Thornwell Primary School	168,782	50,170	218,952	
<b>Monmouth cluster</b>				

Monmouth Comprehensive	(31,922)	201,815	169,893	
Cross Ash Primary School	(14,677)	41,329	26,652	
Kymin View Primary School	63,486	(15,609)	47,877	
Llandogo Primary School	(7,412)	2,928	(4,484)	
Osbaston CiW Primary School (VC)	63,807	10,829	74,636	
Overmonnow Primary School	255,229	89,778	345,007	
Raglan CiW Primary School (VC)	(161,289)	38,116	(123,173)	
Trellech Primary School	(92,530)	17,656	(74,874)	
Usk CiW Primary School (VC)	(19,112)	(9,173)	(28,285)	
Ysgol y Trefynwy	88,855	55,444	144,299	
<b>Special School</b>				
Pupil referral unit	1,645,026	962,956	2,607,982	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,091,578</b>	<b>3,426,138</b>	<b>7,517,716</b>	

## Appendix 5

### Capital Budget Revisions – Grants and contributions

The Council has received a number of new capital grants and external contributions that weren't included in the original capital budget approved at the start of the year.

According to the Council's financial procedures, any changes to the capital budget that are fully funded by grants or outside contributions must be approved by Cabinet.

Whilst some of the more significant capital grant funding programmes, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, would have been subject to a standalone Cabinet report to endorse them, for completeness this schedule includes all grant related changes to the capital programme during the year.

These changes are either:

- New grants or contributions that have been received, or
- Adjustments to existing grants or contributions that were already part of the budget. This could be due to final grant allocations being lower/higher than indicative values, or if the timing of expenditure differs to the grant timings.

Grant. ref	Scheme Category and Scheme	Budget revision	Purpose of Funding	Notification Date
<b>Asset Management Schemes</b>				
M-MON-0004	School Refurbishment Grant	328,916.00	Capital Repairs and Maintenance 2025-26	21/05/2025
M-MON-0004	Schools Repair & Maintenance Grant	250,000.00	Capital Repairs and Maintenance 2025-26	21/05/2025
Welsh Government	School Refurbishment Grant	385,943.00	Welsh Government Support funding for the Schools Maintenance program	12/01/2026
Insurance Company	Drybridge House Flood Insurance Claim	5,000,000	Funding to cover the refurbishment of Drybridge House after recent flooding	21/01/2026
		<b>5,964,859.00</b>		
<b>School Development Schemes</b>				
Welsh Government	King Henry VIII - Future Schools Tranche B	1,256,628.72	Secondary School Replacement – multi-year scheme till 2026/27	n/a
CFS-MON-1004	Projects to Safely and Effectively Open Schools to the Community Outside Traditional Hours	482,429.00	support delivery of MCC	14/07/2025



Grant. ref	Scheme Category and Scheme	Budget revision	Purpose of Funding	Notification Date
			d) Improving the individual's ability to maintain independence at home. e) Promoting the well-being of the individual.	
		<b>340,577.00</b>		
	<b>Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b>			
Safer Routes	Safer Routes in the Community	338,000.00	Kingwood Gate to Williamsfield Lane route links	27/03/2025
Road Safety; Capital	Road Safety Capital Grant	470,000.00	A4136 Staunton Road - Collision Reduction Scheme (258k); B4235 Chepstow to Mynydd Bach - Collision Reduction Scheme (212k)	27/03/2025
20 Mph Grant	20 MPH Capital Grant	37,000.00	The Purpose of this funding is to support the implementation of the 20mph default speed limit	27/03/2025
Resilient Roads fund	RRF - A4136 Staunton Road Stabilisation	494,000.00	Design, development and WeITAG 3	27/03/2025
LTF Award	Local Transport Fund	700,000.00	Additional real-time information displays; Abergavenny Nevill Hall bus turnround; Bus stop information and shelters; Monmouth bus station improvement	27/03/2025
FCERM Capital Grant 2023/24	Woodside Usk Flood Alleviation Scheme Grant 24/26	368,000.00	Design / development / Full Business Case Development	07/11/2024
		<b>2,407,000.00</b>		
	<b>Other Schemes</b>			

Grant. ref	Scheme Category and Scheme	Budget revision	Purpose of Funding	Notification Date
ATF Award	ATF Core Llanfoist Bridge & Meadow Links	6,000,000.00	Partial award for construction 25/26	27/03/2025
UK Gov – Dept for Levelling Up	Chepstow Transport Hub & Connectivity Improvements	5,227,320.00	Award of LUF funding for improvements at Chepstow transport hub	10/11/2025
ATF Award	ATF Core Consultation	500,000.00	Construction of Caldicot MUR and Monmouth Wye Valley Active crossing	27/03/2025
TT-SE-PM-MCC-001	Placemaking Grant programme (Transforming Towns)	700,000.00	2025-26 allocation. Project 2022-2027 (£1,553,954 in total)	02/04/2025
Welsh Government	Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant	235,000.00	The Purpose of the Funding is to enable Emergency Works to flood assets only following Severe Weather during November 2025	07/01/2026
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Gwent Green Grid	200,000.00	Healthy: Improve health and wellbeing	01/07/2025
EYCP/AWPOG/CAPITAL 2025-26	Chepstow Play Parks - (WG Funded)	128,619.28	The Purpose of the Funding is to support shortfalls identified within Monmouthshire's' Play Sufficiency Assessment 2025	13/01/2026
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF -Town Centre Placemaking 2025-26	100,000.00	additional investment into town centres. Complimentary to existing Transforming Towns funding.	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Monmouth Museum	63,000.00	Shire Hall refurbishment, including internal 'fit out' costs and equipment for movement of exhibits.	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Destination Policy Impact Assessment	55,000.00	Development of the visitor economy	01/07/2025

Grant. ref	Scheme Category and Scheme	Budget revision	Purpose of Funding	Notification Date
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Destination For All	54,000.00	Development of the visitor economy	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Abergavenny Leisure Centre AEFCC	50,000.00	Healthy: Improve health and wellbeing	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Communities Budget	46,744.56	Targeting small scale local investments in the community. Beneficiaries will be community groups, charities, CIC's, etc	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Todays Heritage Tomorrow	26,500.00	Improvements to existing Monmouthshire heritage sites. Currently utilised at Caldicot Castle, Abergavenny Castle & Museum, and Chepstow Museum.	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF - Monmouthshire Circular Economy	20,600.00	Development of the visitor economy	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF – Creative Futures	12,830.00	Inclusive: Bringing communities together, tackling homelessness	01/07/2025
UK Gov - SPF	UKSPF - Granicus	10,000.00	Inclusive: Bringing communities together, tackling homelessness	01/07/2025
Ref: 010251171 Energy Savings Trust (WG)	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure & Zero Emission Vehicle Grant	54,415.62	Supply, installation, and commissioning Of Ev Chargers at Abergavenny Youth Centre; Old Pill Farm Depot; Raglan Depot and Raglan Enterprise Park.	01/10/2025
TT-SE-REV-MONM-004	Transforming Towns - Caldicot Placemaking 2025-26	30,000.00	development of a placemaking plan for future regeneration activity within Caldicot Town Centre	05/08/2025

Grant. ref	Scheme Category and Scheme	Budget revision	Purpose of Funding	Notification Date
WG - Coal Tip Safety	Coal Tip Safety Grant – WG 2025/26	16,157.00	to enable MCC to undertake the appropriate, inspections, surveys and any necessary maintenance / remediation work on coal tips within your local authority area	18/03/2025
		<b>13,530,186.46</b>		
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>21,702,677.29</b>		



<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>MONMOUTHSHIRE'S CULTURAL STRATEGY 2026-2036</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>

**1. PURPOSE:**

To present the Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan and invites Cabinet to approve the strategy and its adoption.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Cabinet approves the Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy and action plan and agrees its adoption.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

3.1 Cultural Activity in Monmouthshire is important to community and individual wellbeing. Culture is a blanket term to describe all the activities which people undertake for enjoyment and recreation, as audience or participant, and which bring people together. Cultural Industries are important to our economy and being a place of vibrant, varied and inclusive cultural activity is part of our 'brand' as a visitor destination and underpins quality of life for our communities. Being able to take part in social, recreational and cultural activities of choice and having access to new experiences underpins the wellbeing of individuals and families. Research shows that access to cultural activity, the arts and heritage enhance mental health, reduces social isolation, and improves overall well-being.

3.2 Monmouthshire Council plays a number of roles in supporting cultural activity in the county. The Council is a direct provider of services, and a custodian of heritage objects and buildings. We hold responsibility for the public realm, and work with other public bodies to ensure public safety. We are a landlord and partner with business and the community and voluntary sector. We co-ordinate activity to raise Monmouthshire's profile and to encourage and support creative industries and the hosting of events and filming

3.3 Monmouthshire is at an exciting point as it acknowledges the importance of its past and looks to use its cultural significance to shape its future. In the Community and Corporate Plan under a Fairer Place to Live we commit to developing an inclusive cultural strategy working with our partners and communities across the county. The document presented is the result of a collaborative process which has brought creative practitioners and diverse organisations together, as well as reviewing where Monmouthshire Council can maximise community value from new opportunities. A number of new events, projects and collaborations have come forward as a result of this process.

3.4 We are now able to share the Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire that honours the unique character of this county, drawing strength from its people, landscapes and heritage.

3.5 The aim of the Cultural Strategy is to strengthen community identity, drive economic growth, enhance well-being, and ensure that the county's diverse voices are heard and valued.

3.6 The Cultural Strategy is a coherent plan that sets out purpose, priorities, and actions for nurturing and sustaining the arts, heritage, and creative industries within our county. It provides a framework for decision-making, seek to secure funding, fosters partnerships, and measures progress.

#### **4 Themes of the draft Strategy:**

4.1 Our Cultural Strategy will commit to making culture accessible to all, by creating more inclusive events, and removing barriers to participation. In Monmouthshire, culture is a source of pride and resilience, helping individuals and communities to flourish.

4.2 Cultural engagement is a powerful catalyst for learning, creativity, and innovation. By working with our schools, youth groups, libraries, and community organisations, the cultural strategy will nurture the next generation of creative thinkers and makers. This is not only about developing future artists; it's about fostering curiosity, confidence, and the skills needed in a rapidly changing world. Heritage trails, artist residencies, and digital platforms can all play a role in inspiring lifelong learning.

4.3 Monmouthshire is home to a wealth of creative talent from writers, musicians, actors, craftspeople, and more. Our cultural strategy can support this ecosystem through established partnership, by offering training, networking, low cost/affordable spaces, and opportunities to showcase work. By

strengthening the sector, Monmouthshire can retain talent, attract new voices, and foster innovation.

4.4 The creative industries are one of the fastest-growing sectors in the UK, and Monmouthshire is well-placed to benefit from this boom. By mapping assets, identifying gaps, and focusing investment, a cultural strategy can unlock new economic opportunities. Heritage sites can be developed as sustainable tourism destinations; local artists and makers can be supported to reach wider markets; and town centres can be revitalised through cultural events and public art. A bold, clear strategy can attract inward investment, support small businesses, and help diversify the local economy.

### **Development Process:**

4.5 No cultural strategy can succeed without the active involvement of the people it is meant to serve. Monmouthshire's communities are diverse, ranging from long-established families rooted in rural villages, to recent arrivals seeking new beginnings, to lively market towns where tradition and innovation meet. This diversity is a source of strength, creating opportunities for collaboration, learning, and mutual support.

4.6 Over the past year we have worked in collaboration with local community and town councils, stakeholders, voluntary groups, and creative practitioners to foster inclusive cultural networks to share experiences, create opportunities and to gather intelligence to inform the draft cultural strategy.

4.7 In person workshops were held in the summer of 2025 and 93 individuals engaged and contributed to the development of the Cultural Strategy. At each workshop the same questions were asked of participants to give consistency and ensure the scope of the themes of the strategy were being addressed, whilst giving individuals the freedom to share their experiences, knowledge and expertise. A summary has been drawn up and can be found in Appendix 3.

4.8 The wider consultation through Let's Talk Monmouthshire was made available through an online survey from 31 October to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025). 135 responses were received (Appendix 4) which have been collated, analysed and comments received are now reflected in the Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire.

4.9 Of the 135 responses received, **68.1%** were female; **62.2%** were over 55 years old; **28.1%** took part in cultural activity a couple of times a month whereas **26.7%** took part in cultural activity at least twice a week. **50.8%** of respondents who took part in cultural activity did so within their own town/village area of Monmouthshire.

**85%** of respondents indicated that taking part in cultural activity gave them a sense of wellbeing with **73%** saying it made them feel part of their community and **70%** stated that cultural activity supported the local economy. Most people who responded participated in cultural activity as an audience member but significant amounts also as volunteers, performers and artists.

4.10 Comments received were mainly positive and supportive of a cultural strategy for Monmouthshire. We acknowledged the feedback and have ensured greater inclusion of children and young people throughout the strategy, and how to promote and encourage people into employment within the cultural sector; acknowledging the difference between north and south, each town and village across the county whilst still being part of the whole; the vast range of twinning and cultural exchanges across the county; a central webpage/database available to the cultural sector to promote events and how to get to them, and find out about opportunities for training and funding.

4.11 Inclusion of additional events and activities were submitted and are now reflected in the Cultural Strategy including – Magor Frost Fayre; Usk Choral Festival; Kingfisher choir; Monmouth Choral Society; Happy Dragon Theatre; Abergavenny Film Club; Monnow Valley Studio; The Boat Penallt; U3A; WI; Plas Gunter Mansion; local church bells ringers and Morris dancers.

Other generic comments and specific suggestions for work programmes received will be collated and passed on the Cultural Partnership Forum to review and include in future action plans and work programme.

4.12 Whilst the development of the Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire has been led by the council, it's been coproduced to ensure that Monmouthshire's stories are told, its creativity is celebrated, and its communities are empowered to shape their own futures and creating strong foundations for resilience, prosperity, and well-being.

4.13 To support delivery of the strategy, it is proposed that the Council establish a Cultural Partnership Forum empowered and resourced to make a difference and lead on the action plan. The Partnership forum will meet quarterly and will be made up of nominated individuals. The scope of the panel membership will be devised in due course.

4.14 We are working with the Centre for Creative Economy at Cardiff University to understand and establish benchmarks and key cultural outcomes for Monmouthshire including economic, environmental and social benefits; alongside developing initiatives that will see an increase in employment and wellbeing through engagement with the cultural sector.

4.15 The action plan is modest and achievable for its initial first year. Subsequent years will be strengthened through the Partnership Forum as key themes and projects are identified and presented with these community representatives. Using the identified key cultural outcomes for Monmouthshire, that reflect our county, this strategy will help inform place specific local policy and supportive initiatives for local sector growth, adding value to our county and its rich creative ecosystem.

4.16 The Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy will support the council's suite of other plans and strategies including the Placemaking Plans to support the creation of vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive spaces; the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy to support existing jobs and create new opportunities for businesses and creative industries across the county, and the Monmouthshire Destination Management Plan to ensure that our county is a sought-after tourism destination, to grow our visitor economy and be an inspiring, connected and welcoming place.

4.17 Following Place scrutiny committee on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (appendix 2), the following amendments have been made to the Cultural Strategy:

Inclusion of:

- incidental Welsh throughout the document
- referencing the Heritage Strategy which lists our assets, ensuring their preservation and action plans to achieve this
- referencing the increase of Welsh speakers across the county and our 3 Welsh primary schools
- recognition of volunteers who support activities and events
- recognising low and free cost options to our heritage attractions
- support for artists and creatives to showcase their work within council owned assets
- timeline includes references to Severnside towns and villages
- the addition of Caldicot Male Voice Choir.

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

Integrated Impact Assessment attached. (Appendix 5)

#### **5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
Cabinet to consider the Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire	To approve and adopt the first Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy		This is the preferred option. The Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire and Action Plan is considered <i>To inspire thriving, connected communities and a prosperous, sustainable future by empowering creative talent, celebrating diversity and fostering wellbeing for all.</i>

## 6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The baseline for evaluating performance against a wide range of economic and wellbeing objectives will be set by the Cultural Partnership Forum when established. It is proposed that progress on delivery will be reported through the Service Business Plan, and annually with a report from the Chair of the Cultural Partnership Forum, with updates to Place Scrutiny Committee as needed.

## 7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To adopt the first Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire that will assist in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the county, ensuring that future generations can appreciate and learn from it.
- 7.2 The Strategy will contribute to the Council's ambitions for Monmouthshire - A prosperous county, supporting well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life. A thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop; and where people feel part of a community and are valued.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Officer time and costs associated with the preparation of the Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire has been met from the Heritage and Culture budget within Place and Community Wellbeing.

8.2 The implementation of the strategy will be led by the Head of Culture, Community Learning and Events and colleagues within Place and Community Wellbeing. It is anticipated that officer time and costs will be met from internal directorate budgets for the initial year, to cover the development and design of a central webpage for cultural activities and information, and networking events to bring together and promote sectors of the cultural community. Once the Cultural Forum is established, and along with partners, additional grants will be sourced to support the continued development of cultural activity and implementation of the strategy across the county.

**9. CONSULTEES:**

Lead Portfolio Cabinet Member  
Chief Officer for Place and Community Wellbeing  
SLT  
Business Cabinet  
Place Scrutiny Committee

The Council's Place Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Cultural Strategy on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026. The Committee requested that officers consider the points raised by the Place Scrutiny Committee and amend the strategy as appropriate. The feedback would be provided to the Cabinet to take into account prior to approving the draft Cultural Strategy at their meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

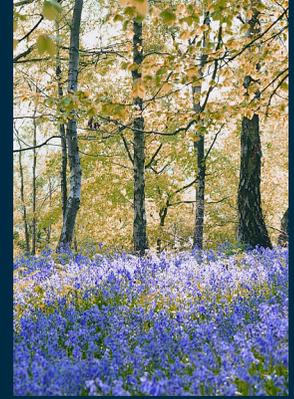
Appendix 1 – Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy 2026-36  
Appendix 2 – Place Scrutiny Committee - Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
Appendix 3 - Summary of Consultations with Creatives and Stakeholders  
Appendix 4 - Survey Response Report Let's Talk Monmouthshire  
Appendix 5 - Integrated Impact Assessment

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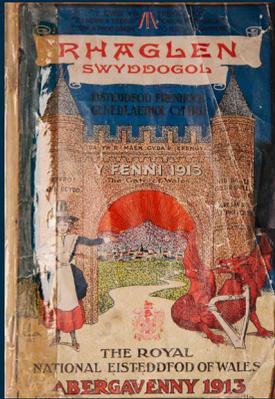




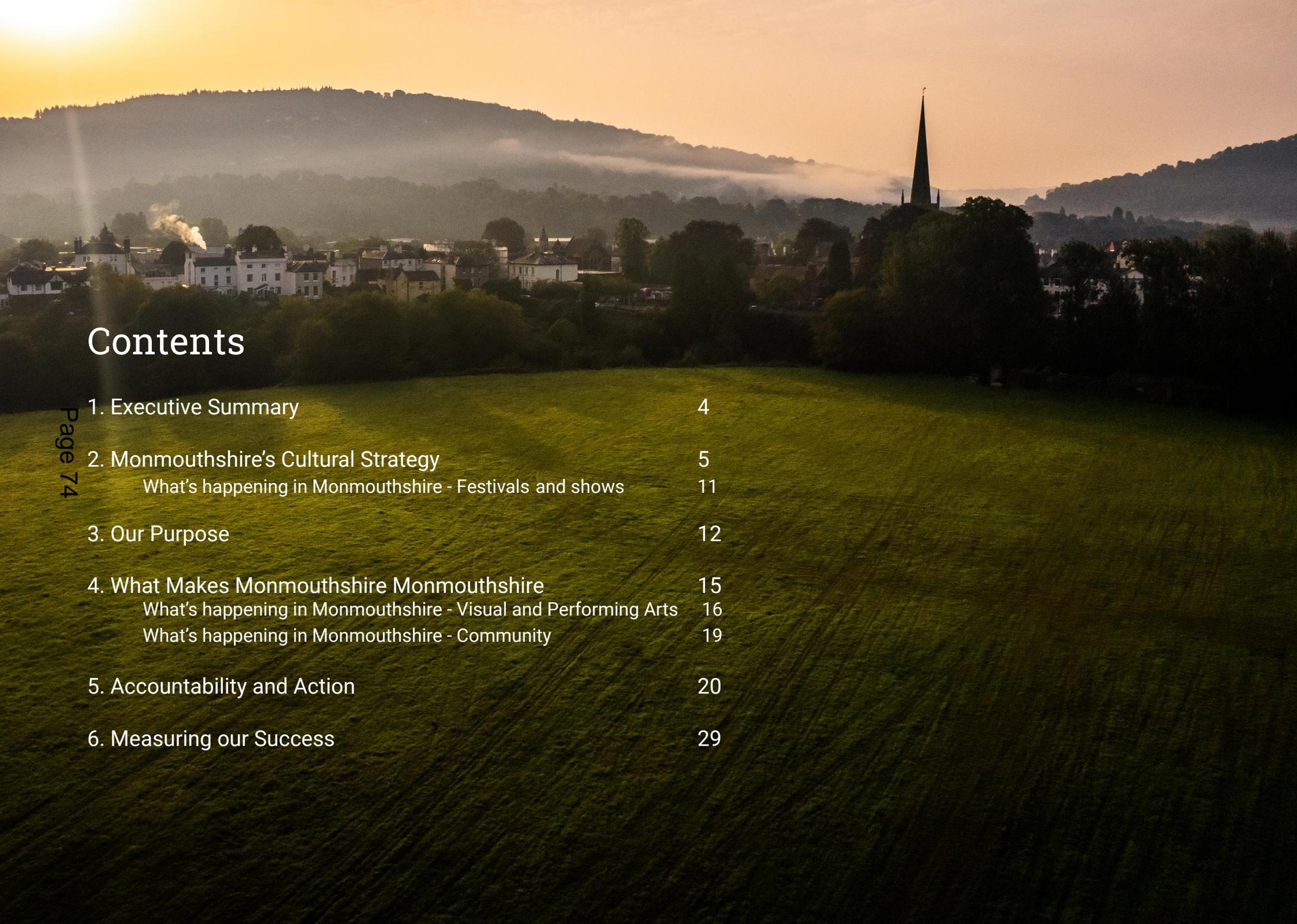
# A Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire

2025 - 2035

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monmouthshire  
sir fynwy



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## Welcome

from Council Leader, Mary Ann Brocklesby

I am always amazed at the excellence and diversity of culture in Monmouthshire. Our county really does have something for everyone. What's more I am inspired by the extraordinary breadth of talent of all ages who contribute to the vibrancy and quality of our cultural life.

Monmouthshire Council has a wonderful inheritance of historic buildings, exciting museum collections, beautiful parks, the Borough Theatre and Caldicot Castle which we hold in trust for future generations and manage on behalf of the public.

Even more importantly, and alongside Town and Community Councils, we have a role in supporting the many volunteers who make community events and performances happen, bringing people together and brightening all our lives.

The cultural industries are important to our economy. Monmouthshire is home to hundreds of amazing people – from poets to musicians, textile artists to ceramicists and film makers to landscape painters to name but a few - who create the culture we all consume and bring wealth and visitors to our county.

This Strategy aims to bring all these strands together, as part of working towards a greener, fairer Monmouthshire, where everyone can enjoy their chosen activities in our thriving towns and beautiful landscapes.



## Croeso

from Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing and Tourism, Sara Burch

Monmouthshire is a wonderful place to live and visit because there is always something happening. This Strategaeth Ddiwylliannol/Cultural Strategy sets out our plans to support and amplify our county's rich cultural life.

We want a future where everyone, at every stage of life can be creative and active, can find the thing that makes their heart sing, and find other people who share their passion.

We want to be a county where strange and delightful things occur in the landscape, that hosts world-class events as well as the intimate and local, contemporary as well as traditional, and where people visit as much for cultural experience as for our breathtaking scenery. So many people give their time to run events, share their skills and enrich life in Monmouthshire towns and villages.

Our county is also full of people making a living through their creativity and by providing experiences and hospitality that give pleasure and bring people together. This strategy aims to celebrate their achievements and address how, by working together, we can create even more opportunities, more employment and more moments to treasure.

# 1. Executive Summary

Monmouthshire stands at a pivotal moment in its taith ddiwylliannol/cultural journey. Our landscapes, our people, and our heritage together form an extraordinary foundation from which we can build a thriving and connected future. This Cultural Strategy sets out a bold and necessary vision for the next decade, one that recognises culture not as an isolated activity, but as a powerful force shaping wellbeing, economic growth, community resilience, and our sense of identity.

Across Monmouthshire, culture is lived. It is expressed in our festivals and performances, in our castles and market towns, in our community halls and creative hubs, and in the small moments of connection that happen every day. It is reflected in the passion of our artists, volunteers, audiences, and local organisations who bring imagination and energy to every corner of the county. Their work enriches the lives of our children, young people and maturer residents and reinforces a deep sense of belonging and pride.

Culture also drives prosperity. Creative industries, heritage tourism, and community events play a crucial role in supporting local businesses, skilled employment and the visitor economy. This strategy seeks to build on that momentum by strengthening creative capacity, promoting collaboration, and improving how we share Monmouthshire's story with the world.

This strategy recognises that culture thrives when communities thrive. It places people at the centre ensuring that opportunities to participate, create, learn, and celebrate are accessible to all. The ambitions set out here will help reduce inequality, foster inclusion, and support mental and physical wellbeing through shared experiences, active travel, and vibrant public spaces.

Our heritage assets are an important part of the cultural offer across Monmouthshire. The Heritage Strategy is a separate document that looks at them in detail, including researched site priorities and action plans.

In adopting this Cultural Strategy, we affirm our confidence in Monmouthshire's creativity, resilience, and potential. We commit to celebrating what makes this place unique while nurturing new ideas and opportunities. Above all, we recognise culture as a shared endeavour - one that belongs to every resident, every visitor, and every generation to come.

Together, we can ensure that Monmouthshire's cultural future is vibrant, sustainable, and inspiring.

## 2. Monmouthshire's Cultural Strategy

Located between the curves of the River Wye and the rolling hills of Bannau Brycheiniog/the Brecon Beacons, Monmouthshire stands as a vibrant testament to the interplay of natural beauty and human ingenuity. From historic towns where stories of Roman legions and medieval lords mingle with the local life to the tranquil countryside dotted with stone cottages and hidden abbeys, Monmouthshire's landscape is a canvas painted with centuries of culture, history and resilience.

These landscapes offer not only visual splendour, but also serve as places of inspiration, recreation, and connection. Artists, writers, and musicians have long turned to these hills and rivers for creative spark. The walking trails, cycle routes, and waterways invite residents and visitors alike to experience the outdoors, fostering well-being and a sense of belonging.

Monmouthshire is blessed with a wealth of tangible and intangible heritage. Its castles, such as those at Caldicot, Raglan, Chepstow, and Abergavenny, stand as enduring witnesses to the county's strategic significance across centuries of conflict and alliance. Market towns bustle with echoes of medieval trade, while rural churches, bridges, and stone cottages speak of lives lived.

But heritage in Monmouthshire is not only found in stone and mortar. It lives in stories passed down by families, in local festivals, crafts, and traditions. Agricultural fairs, music gatherings, and seasonal celebrations all contribute to a rich calendar of cultural expression anchoring communities in a shared sense of place and memory.

The Welsh language holds a cultural and historical significance for Monmouthshire, serving as a vital expression of local identity and heritage. Hosting the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2016 created an excitement around the language. Welsh learner activity has increased demonstrating the interest to speak bilingually. Local eisteddfodau are regularly held in schools including in our three Welsh language primary schools across the county. Integrating the Welsh language into the county's cultural strategy strengthens community cohesion, supports educational opportunities, and attracts visitors who are keen to experience authentic Welsh culture. The preservation and promotion of the Welsh language not only honors the region's rich linguistic heritage but also ensures that future generations remain connected to their roots, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

Everyone has a right to participate in the cultural life of Monmouthshire, whether that be as a child, a teenager, a young person or an older adult. It is important to have opportunities to access it in a variety of ways. This could include at home, in school, in our village and town halls, in open spaces, through organised events and at informal get-togethers.





Faith has equally played a formative role in shaping Monmouthshire's cultural landscape, with its churches, chapels, and faith-based traditions reflecting centuries of spiritual and bywyd cymunedol/communal life. Recognising and embracing the diverse expressions of faith within the county's cultural strategy supports inclusive community engagement and mutual understanding. By referencing both language and faith into its cultural strategy, Monmouthshire demonstrates its commitment to celebrating diversity, nurturing cultural vibrancy, and strengthening the unique character of the county.

Creating a cultural strategy for Monmouthshire will assist in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the county, ensuring that children, young people, older adults and future generations can appreciate and learn from it. Implementing this strategy now is crucial because it aligns with the growing recognition of the importance of culture in enhancing the quality of life. By bringing this strategy to our communities, we can ensure that cultural resources are accessible to everyone, promoting inclusivity and diversity. This approach not only enriches the lives of individuals but also strengthens the social fabric of Monmouthshire - a well-defined cultural strategy will attract tourism, boost the local economy and create job opportunities.

The cultural strategy for Monmouthshire is an investment in the county's future. It is a statement of confidence in the power of culture to unite, inspire, and transform.

It will ensure that Monmouthshire's stories are told, its creativity is celebrated, and its communities are empowered to shape their own futures. The geography of the county contributes to this, with its historic bridges, connected routes, and river crossings bringing people together, fostering the exchange of ideas, customs, and commerce. This is further strengthened by our strong twinning and cultural exchanges that offer international experiences thus further enriching learning and knowledge. By encouraging new ways of experiencing and interpreting our environment through festivals, art, storytelling, and sustainable tourism, we aim to ensure that Monmouthshire remains alive with meaning for children, young people and older adults and for present and future generations.

By working together across boundaries and generations, we can build a cultural legacy that will inspire, sustain, and connect us for years to come. Whether you are a lifelong resident, a creative professional, a newcomer or a visitor, you have a role to play in shaping the cultural life of this remarkable county.

Monmouthshire's story is still being written. With imagination, commitment, and collaboration, we can ensure that its next chapters are rich with possibility.

*'Culture is the sea we swim in'* (quote from survey participant)

# The impact and influence of culture

Culture is a living, breathing force that shapes the fabric of our lives and communities. At its heart, culture is a vessel of shared stories, one that anchors individuals of all ages within a larger collective. Participation in cultural traditions, celebrations, and rituals strengthens the sense of perthyn/belonging. Whether through language, cuisine, music, or dress, culture provides markers of identity, affirming individual worth and connection to others.

Culture broadens horizons and opens doors. Exposure to diverse artistic forms, narratives, and perspectives encourages curiosity. It provides opportunities to learn, to dream, and to imagine new possibilities. For many, cultural activities are gateways to discovering hidden talents, developing skills, and pursuing passions.

One of the most significant contributions of cultural engagement lies in its ability to support mental health and well-being. Participation in culture can reduce stress, enhance mood, and contribute to better physical health by encouraging active lifestyles. Culture supports emotional resilience and lifelong personal growth, enriching individual lives and the wider community. The act of participating in a concert or bellringing group or attending a theatre performance can lift spirits and alleviate feelings of isolation.

Opportunities exist to combine education and cultural enrichment within formal learning settings and community organisations.

The community values difference and celebrates slowness - not as a lack of action, but as space to breathe, reflect, and grow.



We understand the importance and value of cultural activities for children and young people, nurturing their creativity, self-expression, boosting their confidence and promoting a sense of identity. By participating in music, art, drama, dance, or heritage projects, young people develop essential skills such as teamwork, communication, critical thinking and transferable skills that can support their future ambitions, while also enriching society as a whole.

Overall, involvement in cultural activities supports emotional resilience and lifelong personal growth, enriching both individual lives and the wider community.

The celfyddydau creadigol/creative arts demand imagination, discipline, and resilience, encouraging participants to challenge themselves and explore new aspects of their personalities.

Comments from residents on how culture impacts or affects their lives:

*It offers a bit of peace from the relentless day to day and whether you are exploring a ruin, listening to music or trying new food at the night market, it gives you a sense of belonging and a place in the world.* (Quote from survey participant)

*It enhances my life when I can find things to do, makes me feel invigorated and inspired.* (Quote from survey participant)





For some, the journey leads to professional paths in the creative industries - artists, writers, technicians, performers, designers, and craftspeople whose contributions enrich society. The cultivation of creative skills through cultural cyfranogiad/participation not only drives personal development but also helps build vibrant economies.

Creative industries generate employment, attract tourism, and stimulate innovation across sectors, such as film, music, fashion and design, contributing significantly to local prosperity. Events also act as an economic driver, providing opportunities to support local businesses in areas such as event management, hospitality and transport. We recognise the difficulty in getting into these areas of employment and will look to support apprenticeship opportunities for young people entering the profession and those looking at a career change at a later stage in life.

Monmouthshire has provided the backdrop for blockbuster films such as Captain America and long-running BBC series including Doctor Who. The film adaptation of Owen Sheers' 'Resistance' is set in the remote and stunningly beautiful Vale of Ewyas while the more recent Netflix production 'Sex Education' features a variety of picturesque locations within the inspirational Wye Valley. We also have the ITV period drama Sanditon filming extensively at Caldicot Castle, with the Michael Sheen directed BBC drama 'The Way' and Guy Ritchie directed Netflix drama "Young Sherlock Holmes" both filming in Monmouth.

### **So, what makes Monmouthshire... Monmouthshire?**

It's the quiet power of the landscape, the deep roots of heritage and the spark of creativity. Here, culture isn't something we attend, it's something we live.



An increase in **creative capacity** leads to **cultural activities** which have individual and community benefits. We see a better **tourism** offer which at a societal level leads to an **improved economy** and at a personal level we see improvements in **health** and **wellbeing**.



## What is happening across Monmouthshire

### Gwyliau a Sioeau/Festivals & Shows

Festivals and performances are central to Monmouthshire's cultural life, providing a stage for talent, collaboration, and the sheer joy of gathering. Some highlights of our calendar include:

- **Wye Valley Festival:** Celebrating music, art, and the landscape that inspires them, this festival brings together performers and audiences in venues as varied as ancient churches and outdoor woodland.
- **Medieval Festivals:** Reenactments, jousts and historical workshops transform visitors back in time, giving new life to Monmouthshire's castles and historic sites. History is not just preserved here - it is performed and lived.
- **Devauden Festival:** An eclectic music festival with a family-friendly vibe, Devauden draws a passionate crowd for a weekend of concerts, workshops, and fun. Local bands share the stage with national acts, showcasing the county's musical diversity.
- **Abergavenny Food Festival:** This celebrated event draws foodies from across the UK and beyond to sample the region's produce, watch live chef demonstrations, and learn about sustainable food culture. The festival is a feast for the senses, reflecting the county's rich agricultural heritage and innovative spirit.
- **Agricultural Shows:** Shows at Monmouth, Usk and Chepstow play a vital role in supporting local agriculture, stimulating the economy, and nurturing a vibrant community spirit. They unite people, preserve rural traditions and showcase the best of the region's heritage.
- **Literary and Writing Events:** Monmouthshire is a haven for writers and book lovers. Literary festivals, author talks, and book clubs abound, turning market towns into homes for storytelling and the written word.

Festivals are year-round projects anchored by creative committees and community participation. They help foster new friendships, spark inspiration, and nurture the next generation of artists and performers.





## Our purpose

By 2035, our ambition is for Sir Fynwy/Monmouthshire to be recognised nationally and internationally as a destination where culture flourishes for visitors and residents, children and adults, teenagers and older people, seamlessly blending history, creativity, and well-being across generations.

Culture can address inequality, enhance personal wellbeing, and foster social connections. Across Monmouthshire free entry and low-cost options to access culture can be found in many locations. For example, the museums in Monmouth, Chepstow and Abergavenny, in our heritage attractions such as Clydach Iron Works and Tintern Old Station and in green spaces such as Linda Vista Gardens and Caldicot Country Park. We also recognise that in some instances, payment is necessary and investment in cultural opportunities is valuable to all. By providing shared spaces for expression and dialogue, cultural activities can create opportunities for inclusion, celebrate diversity and bridge divides, helping to reduce social disparities. Research shows engagement with arts and culture supports mental and emotional health and offers outlets for creativity, reflection, and stress relief. Furthermore, cultural events and traditions unite people, strengthening community bonds and a sense of belonging, which are essential for a harmonious and resilient society.

To support culture we will, with partners, source and facilitate funding to invest in resources, our community volunteers, cultural venues, landscape and historical spaces. We will collaboratively provide spaces to support local artists and creatives to showcase their work. Existing examples of this include 'Art in the Bar' in the Borough Theatre, and the first Caldicot Arts festival in 2025, celebrating local artists and creatives.

Continued investment in active travel routes promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging walking and cycling, reducing reliance on cars and lowering carbon emissions. They enhance community connectivity, making it easier and safer for people to access local services, schools, and workplaces as well as participating in cultural events across the county.

Monmouthshire's outstanding natural heritage will be protected and ensuring our landscapes and biodiversity are valued for generations to come. Whether facing the challenges of climate change, demographic shifts, or economic uncertainty, Monmouthshire will be ready to adapt and respond. Culture is a source of resilience as it helps communities reflect, reimagine, and rebuild.



Our parks and open spaces will continue hosting major events and festivals, drawing thousands of visitors each year and providing local people with spaces to connect, dathlu/celebrate, and play.

Through ambitious placemaking, we will breathe new life into our communities. Our museums will continue to tell the stories of our communities through their diverse collection of documents and objects, hosting exhibitions that evoke pride, challenge and reflection. Our libraries will continue to host literary events for all ages and we will continue to offer space in our buildings for artists and makers. Town centres will be revitalised, and towns and villages will be animated by events, creative projects, and public art. By providing safe, connected environments for leisure and recreation, we will empower individuals and families to lead active, healthy lives.

Together we will foster communities that are vibrant, resilient, and connected. Cultural activity will champion the customs, traditions, and figures that shape our rich heritage, celebrating the diversity and depth of our communities. It will contribute to a thriving, sustainable economy by driving skilled employment and creating rewarding jobs.

Monmouthshire will welcome visitors in ways that are sustainable and positive for local communities. Monmouthshire's towns and villages will be alive with cafés, restaurants, galleries, leisure activities, and creative businesses, offering everyone the chance to enjoy and participate in our cultural life.

The strategy is a commitment to place culture and its people's wellbeing at the centre of Monmouthshire's future. By harnessing the power of creativity, heritage, leisure, and community, we will build a county where people and places thrive together, memories are made, and new stories are written.

## 4. What makes Monmouthshire Monmouthshire?

Monmouthshire is buzzing with creativity. People speak yn angerddol/passionately about the land itself. The dramatic Black Mountains, the picturesque Usk and Wye Valley, Tintern's mystical atmosphere, and our National Landscapes (previously AONB) create not just stunning backdrops but deep personal connections. For many, the landscape has been life changing; *"I didn't realise I was an artist until I came to Monmouthshire. The county doesn't just support creative practice, it awakens it. The soil is good, the views are better, and the impact on wellbeing and imagination is lasting"* (Workshop Participant).

This is a place where nature and heritage are intertwined. The canal rich with history and wildlife is more than a historic route, a place for everyone, from walkers and families to artists and heritage lovers. Improving cycle and walking routes help people experience the landscape in a more connected and sustainable way.

Monmouthshire boasts a remarkable density of castles and churches. These heritage assets are not just monuments; they are reminders of the county's long and varied past, and often serve as venues for events, performances, and festivals.

The county's identity as a borderland adds complexity. There is a strong sense of place, of movement and meeting points. Influences come from different directions which contribute to our unique culture.

Volunteers across Monmouthshire are the lifeblood of cultural events, bringing invaluable energy, passion, and commitment that transform each activity and event into a truly memorable celebration.

We are fortunate that so many give their time to ensure that activities continue to be provided and grow for our communities and future generations to enjoy.

*"The communities of Monmouthshire and adjoining co-communities are special with our own histories and friendships. This is authentic culture of people living and working together across the imaginary boundaries between counties and countries"*. (Quote from survey participant)

From Abergavenny to Usk, Caldicot and Chepstow to Monmouth, each town has its own personality and traditions. It is important that we acknowledge the different characteristics in the North and South of the county alongside recognising its whole. The living levels at Magor and Undy reflect a rich historical landscape shaped by past industrial and rural activities, significantly influencing local identity, community life, and the preservation of South Wales' cultural heritage. The network of villages creates a cultural patchwork that is unique to Monmouthshire.





## What's happening across Monmouthshire

### Visual and Performing Arts

Creativity in Monmouthshire flourishes through a dense network of local groups and clubs and Monmouthshire's landscape is dotted with creative hubs where ideas are born, rehearsed, shared, and celebrated.

- Wye Valley Sculpture Garden provides an opportunity to experience creative practice.
- Artists Meet Ups like Abergavenny & Grosmont Drink and Draw where artists gather to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and find new inspiration in each other's work.
- Dramatic Monmouthshire: From pantomimes to serious theatre, amateur dramatics groups provide a supportive home for aspiring performers and backstage wizards, alongside writers and directors, in conjunction with those for whom theatre is part of their professional life.
- Choirs play an important role in our communities with Kingfisher Choir, Monmouth Community Choir, Caldicot Male Voice Choir and Monmouth Choral Society being some examples.

Grassroot activities are the lifeblood of the county, ensuring that culture is always evolving and that everyone finds their creative voice.

# What's happening in our cymunedau/communities

We asked our local communities what exciting things are happening in the area and their answers painted a vibrant picture of culture, community, and celebration. These are just some of the responses:

Local organisations help drive creativity. Dance Blast brings movement and energy to the community, Happy Dragons Theatre creates performances for, with and about the people of Wales; Suitcase Theatre offers imaginative performances, and the Film Society including Abergavenny Film club, fosters thoughtful discussion through cinema. The amateur arts scene is thriving too, with passionate people creating and performing across the county.

Music has a strong presence, from world-renowned Rockfield Studios and Monnow Valley Studio to events like Usk Choral Festival and Castell Rock that tie performance directly to place. Pubs such as The Boat Penallt, Hen & Chickens and the King's Arms in Abergavenny, are part of the cultural ecosystem where local stories, songs, and community gatherings thrive.

Thriving U3A's, Women's Institute groups and local History Societies provide a rich diverse menu of experiences and opportunities across the county.

The AM and Raglan Music Festivals, local church bell ringing groups, Morris dancers, Abergavenny Art Festival, Caldicot Art Festival and the Wye Valley River Festival bring people together through music, performance, and shared values. VE Day commemorations also stand out, reminding us of the deep connections between culture and history.

Festive markets including Magor Frost Fayre bring sparkle and enjoyment alongside the annual turning on of the christmas lights across our towns and rural communities.

Monmouthshire boasts a vibrant sporting scene which enriches its cultural life. Chepstow Racecourse, renowned for hosting prestigious fixtures such as the Welsh Grand National draws crowds from the region and beyond.



Our picturesque cefn gwlad/countryside is an attractive destination for amateur and professional cyclists, from local sportives to the Tour of Britain. These are opportunities for participation and spectating and bringing local communities together.

But it's not just the big events that people are talking about - smaller, more unique events are equally loved. From the Plant and Seed Swap by Transition Town Monmouth to the wonderfully quirky duck herding at Monmouth Carnival, there's a joyful sense of creativity everywhere. The Wye Makes and Far Open Art Trail give artists a chance to shine. There's even a Chepstow Elvis Festival, and a "May the Fourth Be With You" performance for Star Wars fans.

Page 90 The locations where cultural activity happens are varied. Whether it's a community archaeological dig, a theatre production in an open space, artists and makers in our markets or a cosy book club gathering in a local community centre or even a pub, the cultural calendar is full of surprises.

The places that host these activities are just as important. Well loved venues include the Borough Theatre, Melville Theatre, Bookish and the bustling Abergavenny Market.

The Savoy Theatre in Monmouth and the Chapel and Art Shop in Abergavenny offer more intimate cultural experiences. Shire Hall and Plas Gunter Mansion are both embarking on ambitious refurbishment projects which will revitalize and regenerate their towns. The newly refurbished Drill Hall in Chepstow and Monmouthshire's many community halls hosts events of all kinds. And our cultural spaces go beyond being venues for events, they are also spaces where communities can come for support in times of trouble whether that be for practical assistance or somewhere to reflect.

Creative spaces like TogetherWorks in Caldicot and relaxed settings like The Boat Inn, Penallt, and Robin Hood, Monmouth, a 'Night out' supported cinema showing in a village hall, prove that culture happens everywhere - from formal venues to informal community hubs. The natural beauty of Wentwood Forest plays a role in Monmouthshire's cultural life as do those venues in many of our villages and towns – our schools and village halls.

These events embody Monmouthshire's ethos of "everyone welcome" - where amateurs and professionals, old hands and curious newcomers, are all encouraged to participate.



# What's happening across Monmouthshire

## Community

Partnership is the golden thread running through the fabric of Monmouthshire, evident in the multitude of grassroots and community-led events that light up the calendar year-round. They are more than just dates in the diary; they are living expressions of Monmouthshire's warmth and togetherness. Many events thrive on gwirfoddolwr/volunteer power, local know-how, and an openness to all, making them the true soul of the county. Among them are:

- **Monmouth Lantern Parade:** Each winter, Monmouth's streets are transformed into a river of light as locals craft and carry lanterns, illuminating both the town and the bonds between neighbours. What began as a simple act of gathering has blossomed into a well loved annual tradition, bringing people of all ages together to celebrate creativity and unity.
- **Mari Lwyd Tradition in Chepstow:** Folk heritage is alive and kicking in Monmouthshire. The ancient ritual of Mari Lwyd, where a horse's skull, decked in ribbons, leads a singing and Morris dancing procession from pub to pub. This event keeps the myth and magic of Welsh folklore pulsing through Chepstow's streets.
- **Usk in Bloom:** Every summer, the town of Usk explodes in a riot of colour as locals compete and collaborate to make their gardens and public spaces blossom. It's not just about flowers: it's about pride, friendly rivalry, and the collective effort that transforms the entire town.
- **Monmouth Living Windows:** Shopfronts become living canvases, animated by pop-up performances, art installations, and imaginative window displays. This event blurs the lines between everyday life and performance, inviting passers-by to pause, reflect, and connect with the creativity at the community's core.
- **Pride Events:** Monmouthshire's Pride celebrations, wherever they spring up are thriving and growing. These events champion inclusivity and diversity. From rainbow parades to community discussions, Pride in Monmouthshire is a beacon of acceptance and celebration.
- **Remembrance Parades:** These countywide events provide an opportunity for all generations with a physical reminder of all those who have served and sacrificed ensuring that no-one is forgotten.



## 5. Accountability and Action

Culture is a vital driver for achieving Monmouthshire's broader uchelgeisiau/ambitions and realising the goals of the council and its partners. Our long-term vision is ambitious but realistic and will bring together a variety of organisations to ensure delivery.

Delivering this strategy will require steady and consistent leadership, good governance, and close collaboration by individuals and organisations from across Monmouthshire and beyond. Delivery will happen through creative arts, heritage and leisure organisations who collectively make up the 'cultural sector' alongside its wider community groups, businesses, education providers, and public bodies, each of whom has a role to play in developing and promoting culture across the county and all benefit from doing so.

Effective delivery also relies on the proactive involvement and leadership of the County Council, community and town councils, alongside stakeholders and partners. Whilst the council ensures that the cultural strategy aligns with wider community goals and local development plans, community and town councils support and fund events and venues and act as vital links to local residents, fostering a sense of ownership, encouraging participation, and ensuring that the strategy reflects the needs and aspirations of the people it serves.

Monmouthshire Council supports cultural activity through several roles:

- **Regulator:** Oversees planning, licensing, and public safety at events through collaboration with internal departments, emergency services and hospitality businesses.
- **Educator:** puts cultural experience at the heart of the school curriculum and provides lifelong adult education opportunities.
- **Public Realm Steward:** Maintains streets, town centres, parks, open spaces and public rights of way to ensure they are clean and accessible culture filled spaces, enjoyable to all.
- **Landlord:** Responsible for venues where cultural activities take place, partnering with tenants, often volunteer-run to improve use, access, and sustainability.
- **Funder:** Channels funding and resources to support cultural initiatives through partnerships.
- **Information Hub:** Our Tourism team and the Visit Monmouthshire website promote the county as a visitor destination. Working in partnership with Town Councils, hospitality and culture businesses and events promoters we can do more to raise the profile of Monmouthshire and develop audiences.
- **Service Provider:** We operate museums, theatres, heritage sites leisure centres and libraries.



As a body with county wide responsibility in the areas listed above we will strive to create cyfleoedd/opportunities for culture to thrive and develop within Monmouthshire in partnership with our communities and creative practitioners.

Engaging with local businesses, cultural organisations, and educational providers broadens the reach of the strategy, leverages expertise, and fosters innovative approaches to cultural development. The council with its partners can maximise the cultural, social, environmental and economic impacts of the strategy, contributing to the vibrancy and resilience of Monmouthshire's communities.

Within the first year, a Cultural Partnership Forum (CPF) for Monmouthshire will be established. This Forum will be responsible for overseeing the implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the cultural strategy. The Cultural Partnership Forum will comprise representatives drawn from the public, private, and voluntary sectors, ensuring a broad mix of expertise and perspectives relevant to Monmouthshire's cultural landscape.

- The Forum will provide strategic leadership for the cultural strategy, shaping priorities and ensuring alignment with local and national agendas.
- It will monitor and review delivery against an agreed evaluation framework with clear impacts and outcomes and make recommendations for adaptation or improvement as needed.
- Forum members will continue to engage with communities who have participated bringing this Cultural Strategy to fruition.

- Forum members will engage with hard-to-reach community groups ensuring that everyone is able to participate
- Members will act as ambassadors, engaging their respective networks and communities to foster participation and gather feedback.
- An annual report will be developed to give an update to reflect progress, challenges, and emerging opportunities.

By establishing a robust framework, Monmouthshire aims to create a sustainable, inclusive, and dynamic cultural sector, ensuring that cultural activity is embedded in decision-making and delivers meaningful benefits for communities, partners, and visitors alike.



The strategy has an initial 2-year action plan that will establish clear foundations for delivery. Establishing baseline data in the first year will be crucial as it will allow the CPF to measure progress, effaith/impact and evaluate the effectiveness of stated actions against a clear starting point.

The CPF will co-produce and develop this initial action plan to create a 10-year plan.

The actions within the plan have been grouped into three key themes: Places, People and Creative Capacity.

**Places** - our buildings, spaces, and facilities provide the canvas upon which cultural activity takes place. They must be accessible, flexible, and welcoming, designed to host a rich programme of events and activities that spark curiosity, inspire learning, and forge lasting connections.

**People** – culture in Monmouthshire lives and breathes through its people. From community volunteers and storytellers to ambitious artists and active audiences. It is people who bring vibrancy, meaning and connection to the county's cultural life.

More than just events or venues, culture here is a living network of relationships, shared memories and mutual care. Monmouthshire's cultural life also helps tackle social isolation, especially in rural areas offering social connection, safe, inclusive spaces and renewed purpose. Culture offers something vital in these moments: the opportunity to be part of something meaningful.

Community participation has the power to build empathy, belonging and emotional resilience. Cultural moments often feel bigger than just entertainment – they are transformative.

Ultimately, people make culture possible. They show up, create, organise, volunteer, remember and imagine. When people feel included, respected and supported, that culture becomes stronger and truly alive.

**Creative Capacity** is the measure of our ability to nurture and unleash imagination, innovation and artistic excellence within our communities.

However, creativity needs care, attention and investment if it's to thrive. Across the county, there's a shared desire not just to protect our cultural life, but to nurture the creative capacity of our communities from early years through adulthood.





Monmouthshire is blessed with straeon/stories, landscapes, and creative energy. Its cultural strategy is a declaration of confidence in that heritage and a commitment to future prosperity. With a carefully designed action plan, Monmouthshire can ensure that its cultural strategy is more than a statement of intent, it becomes a catalyst for genuine change.

It will enable the county to set priorities, mobilise resources, build partnerships, and measure progress in a transparent and inclusive way. Most importantly, it will empower communities to shape their own cultural destiny, ensuring that Monmouthshire's legacy endures for generations to come.

The strategy and action plan together will guide Monmouthshire toward a future where culture is not just preserved, but celebrated, developed, and shared by all.

# Moments in time across Monmouthshire

**Mesolithic period** – Monmouthshire was occupied by people who were largely nomadic following herds of animals. Long bows and arrows were being developed and flints were traded from the east for tools. Early humans used the Gwent Levels for hunting and fishing. As the climate warmed the landscape became more wooded and wet.

**Bronze Age** - People were starting to use bronze although stone tools were still in use. Round barrows (burial mounds) and hillforts are being built.

**Romans**– Romans arrive in Monmouthshire establishing forts and settlements like Blestium (Monmouth), Usk (Burrium), and Abergavenny to control the local Silures tribe, with later development into important towns such as Caerwent (Venta Silurum), a major tribal capital featuring impressive defensive walls and remains of temples and houses.

**End of the last ice age** - Ice had covered much of Monmouthshire but as it retreated people return to Britain. Remains from King Arthur's Cave on Little Doward show that mammoths, woolly rhinoceros and hyena lived in the Wye Valley.

**Neolithic Period**- Developments in stone tools. Beginnings of more settled communities and farming. Starting to build tombs and monuments such as the standing stones at Trellech. Trading was taking place between Britain and the European continent.

**Iron Age** - Evidence of many Iron Age hillforts in Monmouthshire such as Symonds Yat, Sudbrook and Coed y Bwnydd.

**Post Roman, Anglo Saxon and Normans** - The Celtic King Tewdric dies in Mathern in about 470AD. Christianity arrives in Monmouthshire. Important early churches included Llandogo, Lancaut and Ganerew. Offa, King of Mercia reigned from 757 to 796. Under his rule the Offa's Dyke was built which marks a boundary between the kingdoms of Mercia and Powys.



- 120000

- 8500  
- 4000

- 4000  
- 2500

- 2500  
- 800

- 500  
43

43  
400

400  
1066

**Medieval/Middle ages** - Several castles were built by the Normans to control the contested Welsh border, with key examples including the "Three Castles" (White, Grosmont, Skenfrith) and major sites like Chepstow Castle, Raglan Castle, Monmouth Castle, and Abergavenny Castle.

Tintern Abbey, the first Cistercian Monastery in Wales, was founded, and dissolved 400 years later by Henry VIII.



In 1175, Abergavenny Castle was the site of a notorious massacre when William de Braose invited local Welsh leaders to a Christmas feast and had them killed. This event deepened tensions between the Norman lords and the Welsh, leaving a lasting mark on the region's history.



The Picturesque movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries transformed Monmouthshire into a tourist destination. Visitors flocked to the River Wye for scenic boat tours and explored romantic ruins like Abergavenny Castle, drawn by the movement's celebration of natural beauty and historic charm.

1131

1175

1066  
1200

1400  
1415

1500  
1700

1770  
1850

1065

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that Earl Harold (later King Harold II) built a royal hunting lodge at Portskewett.

Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion turned Monmouthshire into a pivotal battleground during the last major Welsh uprising for independence.



**Post Medieval** – Monmouthshire played a pioneering role in Britain's industrial history. In 1536, the first brass in Britain was produced in the Angidy Valley, and by 1690, the first commercial copper smelting took place at Redbrook. These innovations relied on the River Wye, which served as the vital transport route for raw materials and finished products, driving industrial growth along its banks.

1678

After Henry VIII's break with Rome, Catholicism faced harsh persecution, yet Plas Gunter Mansion in Abergavenny became a secret refuge for priests, with a hidden attic chapel where Mass was celebrated.

1797  
1812



The Construction of Monmouthshire & Brecknock Canal had a major impact on Monmouthshire with improved transport and commerce.

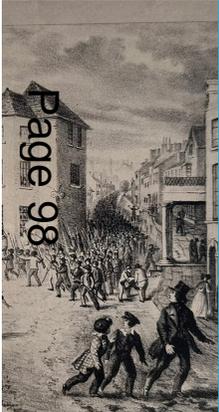
1818

Nathaniel Wells made history as Britain's first Black High Sheriff when he was appointed to serve Monmouthshire.

1833  
1854

The Abergavenny Eisteddfod became one of the largest Welsh cultural festivals during this period, underlining the county's importance in 19th-century Welsh arts and language

1839  
1840



The Chartist trials in Monmouth followed the Newport Rising of November 1839, when thousands of Chartists clashed with troops in Newport. Fourteen men were charged with high treason, and leaders John Frost, Zephaniah Williams, and William Jones were sentenced to death - later commuted to transportation for life, in what became the last major treason trial in British history.

1869

Father Ignatius, a leading figure in the Anglo-Catholic revival, founded a Benedictine monastery at Llanthony in the Vale of Ewyas. His efforts to restore monastic life within the Church of England made the abbey a center of spiritual renewal and a symbol of Victorian religious revival in Monmouthshire.



1873  
1886

The Severn Tunnel was built by the Great Western Railway (GWR) to link South Wales with England.



1910

Charles Rolls, co-founder of Rolls-Royce and a pioneer of aviation, became the first person to complete a non-stop double crossing of the English Channel by airplane.



Monmouthshire becomes home to many Polish people in exile following World War 2, including artist Otto Maciag, Classical Conductor Kazimierz Hardulak and Doctor Wit Tarnawski.

1940s

1926

Former Piercefield Estate land was transformed into Chepstow Racecourse, opening on 6 August 1926. It soon became home to the prestigious Welsh Grand National and remains one of Wales's premier racing venues.

1958

Rockfield Studios opened at Amberley Court Farm in Monmouthshire, becoming the world's first residential recording studio, later hosting legendary artists such as Queen, Oasis, and Coldplay.

1962

The steam engines at Sudbrook Pumping Station were replaced by electric motors. The station pumps out approximately 50 million litres of water from the Severn Tunnel daily.

1963

On 22 June 1963, the Beatles performed at Abergavenny's Borough Theatre during their early UK tour, bringing global pop culture to Monmouthshire.

1971

The Wye Valley was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1971.



1981

Raglan Castle features in the film "Time bandits".

1999

Abergavenny Food Festival is established.

2011

Green Gathering relaunches at Piercefield Park, Chepstow.

2012

The Wales Coast Path opens, making it the world's first, continuous path to follow a nation's coastline.

2016

The National Eisteddfod in 2016 is held in Abergavenny.

And we are still creating moments in time across Monmouthshire.



## 6. Measuring our Success

This chapter outlines a detailed Cultural Strategy Action Plan for Monmouthshire for a two-year period, focusing on enhancing creative capacity, community engagement, and place development through a series of targeted actions. The plan emphasizes partnerships, education, accessibility, and sustainable cultural growth to benefit residents and visitors alike. In March 2027, a new action plan will be developed and published which will have clear baseline data within to show transparency, changes made to focus the strategy and identify emerging impacts.

Theme	Creative Capacity				
Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
1	Establish a Culture Partnership to facilitate the implementation of the Cultural Strategy and its future development	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A fully established Cultural Partnership Forum with clear governance and leadership structures.</li> <li>Deliver the first year of action plan and develop and agree the proceeding action plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater coordination and reduced duplication across cultural organisations.</li> <li>A more diverse voice making decisions about culture in Monmouthshire.</li> <li>Cultural activity that feels more relevant, inclusive, and reflective of diverse lived experiences.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Community and Corporate Plan - Version 3.0_Council.pdf</a>	MCC and partners	April - May 2026

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
2	Establish clear baseline data that provides a factual starting point against which all future progress and changes can be measured	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline cultural data captured and used to inform planning.</li> <li>• A countywide cultural data dashboard enabling evidence-led decision-making.</li> <li>• Annual insight reports tracking participation, economic impact, wellbeing and diversity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <p>A better understanding of our baseline so we can make informed decisions to ensure activity leads to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased participation among underrepresented groups—including rural residents, young people, older adults and diverse communities.</li> <li>• More equitable access to cultural activity across the county.</li> <li>• More adaptive and responsive cultural planning.</li> <li>• Ability to demonstrate long-term impact to funders, partners, stakeholders and Council with clear evidence.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Community and Corporate Plan - Version 3.0 Council.pdf</a>	Cultural Forum and Creative Cardiff	June 2026

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
3	<p>Create a digital platform bringing together resources from the cultural sector in Monmouthshire. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared marketing and publicity resources</li> <li>• A funding database that encourages organisations to work together and coordinate applications to avoid duplication where possible</li> <li>• List of approved transport providers to enable safe routes to and from events.</li> <li>• Tool and resource banks</li> <li>• Workshops and courses</li> <li>• Space where artists can share ideas for residencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shared digital platform providing marketing, funding resources, transport information and creative tools.</li> <li>• Increased opportunities for showcasing local creative talent in both traditional and unexpected places.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater coordination and reduced duplication across cultural organisations.</li> <li>• Increased visibility and accessibility of cultural events and creative opportunities countywide.</li> <li>• More artists, groups and volunteers benefiting from shared resources and networking.</li> <li>• Stronger cultural brand for Monmouthshire.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Destination management - Visit Monmouthshire</a></p> <p>New version to be added</p> <p><a href="#">Monmouthshire Economic and Employment Strategy</a></p>	MCC	June 2026 - December 2026

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
4	Review current community education course offer and identify opportunities to align with Cultural Strategy to enhance opportunities to our communities	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased access to creative skills training.</li> <li>Delivering on the Library strategy outcomes for community and learning opportunities.</li> <li>Expanded opportunities for culture to support mental health, loneliness reduction, intergenerational learning and social cohesion.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth of creative industries and freelance opportunities in Monmouthshire.</li> <li>Growth in increase in educational skill levels and knowledge base.</li> <li>Increased footfall and visitor spend in town centres.</li> <li>Measurable increases in wellbeing indicators for participants.</li> <li>Stronger neighborhood connections and reduced social isolation.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Community and Corporate Plan - Version 3.0_Council.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">Library Strategy 2025-2030</a></p>	MCC Community Learning Services	August 2026

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
5	To design and deliver a Creative Alliance across Monmouthshire that will create peer support and shared resources for those involved in events and activity planning.	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Creative Alliance formed to support collaboration, resource sharing and professional development.</li> <li>• Establish cost benefit of shared resources to local events and activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More artists, groups and volunteers benefiting from shared resources and networking.</li> <li>• Enhanced ability for communities and organisations to plan, promote and deliver cultural work effectively</li> <li>• More efficient use of resources, reduced duplication and stronger shared accountability.</li> <li>• Greater visibility of cultural provision and strategic coherence countywide.</li> <li>• Increase in number of events and activities supported through the Creative Alliance.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">The National Events Strategy for Wales 2022 to 2030</a>	MCC	December 2026

Theme		People			
Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
6	To bring together high-quality opportunities for cultural volunteering with a particular emphasis on increasing the diversity of volunteers.	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coordinated approach to improving the diversity, quality and distribution of cultural volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• Identify key areas for improving volunteering based on data and stakeholder consultation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more diverse, skilled and supported volunteer workforce.</li> <li>• Strengthened social connections, reduced loneliness, and improved wellbeing through cultural engagement.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Volunteering - Monlife</a></p> <p><a href="#">Vision for Volunteering sets out 10-year plan for volunteer work - Museums Association</a></p>	MCC / GAVO and WCVA and volunteering partners	February 2027

Theme		Place			
Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
7	Develop and deliver public art exhibitions in locations which are underrepresented in the county and which will increase footfall to the area.	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and publish a Public Arts Policy and Guidance for Monmouthshire.</li> <li>Development and delivery of public art exhibitions in areas of the county currently underrepresented.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased footfall in town centres, rural hubs and lesser served areas.</li> <li>Broader distribution of cultural activity beyond traditional venues.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Community and Corporate Plan - Version 3.0 Council.pdf</a>	<p>MCC</p> <p>Cultural Partnership Forum</p>	March 2027

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
8	To ensure that consideration is given to the infrastructure for events and activities to enable participants to attend safely.	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New public realm and infrastructure planning incorporates safety, accessibility and lighting for greater participation in events Impacts</li> <li>• Cultural infrastructure and events aligned with environmental sustainability and climate-resilient design.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved safety, confidence and comfort for attendees at cultural events.</li> <li>• Reduced carbon footprint of cultural events.</li> <li>• Increased participation due to improved accessibility and safer public spaces.</li> <li>• Enhanced sense of pride and belonging connected to public art and placemaking</li> </ul>	Placemaking	Cultural Partnership	March 2027

All Themes					
Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
9	<p>Continue to implement our:</p> <p>Annual Culture, Heritage and Arts Delivery Plans.</p> <p>Heritage Strategy</p> <p>We will ensure that these continue to link to wider policies such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and sector areas such as health, economic development, social care, civic life, citizenship and community cohesion.</p>	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued delivery of Monmouthshire County Councils cultural, heritage and arts plans, aligned with broader strategies including wellbeing and economic development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stronger, more resilient cultural ecosystem embedded across the county.</li> <li>Clear evidence of how culture contributes to health, economic growth, environmental goals, social cohesion, and education.</li> </ul>		MCC and partners	Ongoing

Action Number	Action we will take	Measuring progress	Links to other strategies/plans	Lead Organisation	When by?
10	Review this Action Plan annually, maintaining a three-year detailed forward plan	<p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review and publication of the Action Plan to maintain transparency and responsiveness.</li> <li>• Continued delivery of the county's cultural, heritage and arts plans, aligned with broader strategies including wellbeing and economic development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stronger, more resilient cultural ecosystem embedded across council planning.</li> <li>• Clear evidence of how culture contributes to health, economic growth, environmental goals, social cohesion, and education.</li> <li>• Ability to track long term change—showing progress year on year and adapting actions based on data.</li> <li>• Cultural activity recognised as central to Monmouthshire's identity and prosperity.</li> </ul>		Cultural Partnership Forum	January 2027

# *Monmouthshire Scrutiny*

## **Place Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

### **Report Item7: Pre-Decision Scrutiny of the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan**

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues for the Cabinet Member's consideration:

- Is there a need for a separate cultural strategy, could it be combined with the tourism strategy, due to the overlap - few Welsh local authorities have a cultural strategy, and Newport has a more practical approach.
- Members emphasised listing and improving heritage assets, including council-owned buildings, to encourage tourism and engagement.
- The importance of museums, castles, and local history talks as tourist attractions were highlighted and it was suggested there be greater focus on village-level history.
- Discussion took place on specific assets (e.g., bridges, former Abergavenny library, Carnegie libraries) and related renovation projects.
- There was a preference for concrete outcomes (asset improvement) over forums, Members stressing the need for strategies to help groups access grants.
- Concerns were raised about accessibility and affordability of heritage sites for residents, suggesting the potential for local discounts.
- Suggestions were made to include more local village history and faith-based events, noting Christian heritage and events like Christmas and Easter.
- There are several amenities missing in Monmouthshire (e.g., affordable local cinema, major theatre productions) compared to similar towns.
- Members congratulated officers for preparing the strategy internally.
- They recommended more grassroots support for local art exhibitions and activities in council-owned buildings.
- Issues associated with Chepstow Drill Hall were raised (film selection, car parking charges, poor street lighting).
- It was suggested that there be more flexible car parking options to support tourism and businesses.
- Concern was raised in relation to over- or under-representation in the proposed Cultural Forum, with a suggestion that ongoing workshops be held for broader representation.

## *Monmouthshire Scrutiny*

- Members raised that the heritage timeline focused on certain areas (e.g., Wye Valley, Abergavenny) and lacked references to Severnside towns and villages; and suggested including more industrial and railway history.
- The importance of dementia-friendly events was highlighted, not just in care homes but in the community.
- Questions were asked as to how the strategy would ensure skilled, sustainable employment beyond low-skilled, seasonal tourism jobs.
- The addition of Caldicot Male Voice Choir in the list of choirs was requested.
- Members requested that the final strategy include direct links to events and places for easier access to information.
- Members questioned whether the strategy offers strong enough support for volunteers and community-led events, suggesting stronger action points.
- It was requested that greater incidental Welsh is included in the document to reflect local identity (e.g., "Croeso"), emphasising Monmouthshire's status as a Welsh county. Members highlighted the importance of signposting Welsh-medium education and the impact of the National Eisteddfod on the county.

### **Chair's Conclusion:**

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions. The Committee requested that officers consider the points raised by the Place Scrutiny Committee and amend the strategy as appropriate. The feedback would be provided to the Cabinet to take into account prior to approving the draft Cultural Strategy at their meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

# SumnerMcIntyre Key Messages from Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy Consultations with Creatives and Stakeholders

## July-August 2025 and November 2025

SumerMcIntyre held 5 consultation events in July 2025 and two further events in November 2025. 6 events were in-person with invited individuals from the creative community in Monmouthshire, 1 event was held on-line with key stakeholders. The events were held in the Melville Centre, Abergavenny, The Shire Hall, Monmouth, Caldicot Castle and Chepstow Leisure Centre, two further events were held at Chepstow Tourist Information Centre and Tintern Village Hall in November as it was felt that we had not sufficiently captured the views of these areas in the first round of consultation meetings due to low numbers.

Participants included creatives – artists and makers, writers, group leaders, business owners, festival directors and creative industry workers. All participants were fully engaged and participated enthusiastically in the sessions. A number expressed interest in continuing to support the process by being actively involved and others were keen to be kept up to date of progress and to suggest other groups who should be consulted.

Attendance – Abergavenny 17, Monmouth 9, online 11, Caldicot 4, Chepstow 2, Tintern 11, Chepstow 14

The sessions were led to discuss 6 main questions:

**Question 1** – What are the three most exciting things happening in your area/you are involved in that you regard as cultural at the moment? Tell us about culture in your area

**Question 2** - What are our Cultural Strengths? What makes Monmouthshire Monmouthshire? Help us define what is special about Monmouthshire and how this impacts cultural activity, people and places

**Question 3** – What could be better?

**Question 4** - How does culture impact you?

**Question 5** - What words or phrases would you like to see in the vision following our discussions?

**Question 6** - How can we develop new ways of working collaboratively between the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

## 1. Cultural Activity – What’s Exciting Now?

- **Grassroots & community-led events** like Monmouth Lantern Parade, Monmouth Living Windows, Wassail Mari Lwyd tradition in Chepstow (Greenman Backpackers), Usk in Bloom, Electric Picture Hall, Tintern Fete, Queering the Wye and Pride events are thriving.
- **Festivals and live performances** like Abergavenny Food Festival, Devauden Festival, Wye Valley Festival, Art in Penallt, Medieval Festival, Writing Festival, Walking Festival, Bookish events, Tintern fete, Castell Roc, Bandstand, Folk on the lawn, Green Gathering, Cider & Perry Festival are central to cultural life.
- **Creative hubs** like Savoy theatre, Borough theatre, TogetherWorks, Melville Centre, Danceblast, Wye Valley Sculpture Garden, Chepstow Art Space.
- **Local venues** Pubs such as Kings Arms, Abergavenny The Boat and Robin Hood (with new stage) in Monmouth, The Queens Head and The Three Tons in Chepstow and Churches such as St Michael’s Church, Tintern and St Mary’s Chepstow as venues and particularly church halls such as that at Tintern - all support community participation
- **Local groups** – Artists Meet Abergavenny, Plough House Art Group, Grossmont Drink and Draw, Am-Dram Monmouthshire, writing groups, amateur dramatics, and book clubs, heritage talks, local history engagement
- **Outdoor and adventure culture** – viewpoints, mountain biking, Wye Valley walkers

## 2. Cultural Strengths – What Makes Monmouthshire Special?

- **Distinctive natural landscape** (Wye Valley, rivers including **River Tourism**, forests, undulating landscape, mountains) that is the inspiration for so much culture in the county. “I didn’t realise I was an artist until I came to Monmouthshire”. Contrasts – mountains, valleys, rivers and forests. Wye Valley landmarks such as Devil’s Pulpit, Eagle’s Nest, Kymin, film locations
- **Rich heritage assets:** density of castles, Tintern Abbey, Llantony Abbey, abundance of small churches and bridges.

- **Diverse market towns with individual identities** and a network of distinctive villages enrich the overall cultural fabric. The challenge and richness of multiple towns with distinct cultures.
- **Border identity** Unique border identity: Wales–England intersections, shared influences gateway to Wales, borders with Herefordshire, Forest of Dean, and cosmopolitan influence from cities such as Bristol
- **Independent cultural organisations** – Rockfield Studios for music/Wye Valley Sculpture Garden/Art Shop and Chapel, Plough Art Group
- **Stories and Traditions** – historical events such as Henry V, Chartists, number of *firsts* in Monmouthshire to celebrate, folklore and traditions, industrial heritage
- **Wellness landscape:** a lot of practitioners, retreats, outdoor yoga, walking, river activities

### 3. What Could Be Better?

- **Poor communication** – lack of central ‘what’s on’ listing platform, not knowing what’s on in next towns, social media not working, no collective voice, poor advertising infrastructure, Need modernised digital presence: “Headfirst Bristol” used as example.
- **Gaps in cultural infrastructure:** affordable venues, performance spaces, studio spaces, exhibition/art spaces, acoustics, accessibility, capacity issues, teaching spaces, only 2 cinemas across county, lack of community discounts for booking venues such as Chepstow Castle.
- **Poor public transport** limits access across towns, can’t get to cinema for example in different town, can get to Bristol or Gloucester but not across Monmouthshire.
- **Unequal access and funding** – youth and rural communities under-served, Welsh-language, lack of hands-on skills development, representation: PRIDE strong but needs rural support
- **Artists feel unseen and undervalued** – need more public visibility of local talent, wonder if valued up the ladder. Creatives need grant-writing support and structured space/time. Volunteers need structured support and cross-town collaboration
- **Fundraising and sponsorship** – patronage – set up a Monmouthshire Art Fund so businesses can donate and know how to support creativity and artists/creatives can apply for funds or introduction of cultural vouchers to spend in Monmouthshire.

## 4. How Does Culture Impact People?

- **Enhances mental health** and healing, combats loneliness.
- **Enriches people's lives and opportunities**
- Builds a sense of **belonging and identity**.
- Brings **joy and fun**.
- Provides **shared experiences**.
- **Fosters personal growth** and creative careers.
- Culture seen as an **economic contributor** and needs valuing and nurturing as a creative industry. Provides career pathways and talent.
- Culture as a form of **spiritual nourishment and nature connection**.

## How do you capture the impact of culture?

- Sharing data across the county to support future grant applications and encourage investment/support.
- More creative methods of evaluation.
- Importance of shared data to demonstrate impact.

## 5. Vision Words and Phrases

- 216 words were noted during the sessions.
- Community, Local, Outdoor, Accessible, Inclusive, Joyful, Playful, Sustainable, Creative, Empowering, Valued, Landscape



*'A joyful, thriving, accessible county to be creative and to play.'*

*'Where art is part of daily life, and everyone has a voice.'*

*'A county where creativity transforms lives and communities.'*

*'A cultural strategy rooted in landscape, belonging and shared heritage, supporting creative futures for all.'*

*'Inclusive. Inspirational. Vibrant.'"*

*'A county whose creativity is visible, valued and celebrated across all towns and generations.'*

*'A multicultural, open, generous and unifying creative community.'*

*'Monmouthshire celebrates the life, activities and values of the county, in its culture and events together'.*

## 6. New Ways to Work Collaboratively

- Establish a Monmouthshire-wide cultural platform to showcase and connect.
- Support a community panel with real influence and accountability. Must be inclusive and accessible
- Continue and expand database and news emails about culture in the county, build partnerships across sectors.
- Identify culture and arts ambassadors for mentoring and profile-raising
- Look at innovative initiatives (such as the collectives and Monmouthshire Art Fund)
- Develop annual Cultural Celebration Day (different venues)
- Pay and value artists – move beyond volunteer reliance.
- Establish shared creative spaces and hubs across the county – both digital and physical
- Offer mentoring and development support. Provide a toolkit for event organisers.
- Use diverse engagement methods: visual, online, face-to-face, place-based.
- Each town known for something specific and special.

## Strategic Summary

- Monmouthshire's culture is rooted in its landscape, history, border identity and strong community spirit.
- Access, visibility, and connections are the greatest barriers and biggest opportunities.
- Capture local individuality of towns and villages - people, activities and events to highlight grass roots cultural activity - (much is happening in local and rural locations yet to be captured).
- Culture must be visible, valued, and supported to become an economic driver
- Success relies on collaboration, infrastructure, communication, community-led creativity across towns and rural areas and ensuring the cultural strategy is distinct, achievable and creative-led. A strong appetite for collaboration supported by clear structures.

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# Culture - your views

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## **SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT**

16 January 2025 - 06 January 2026

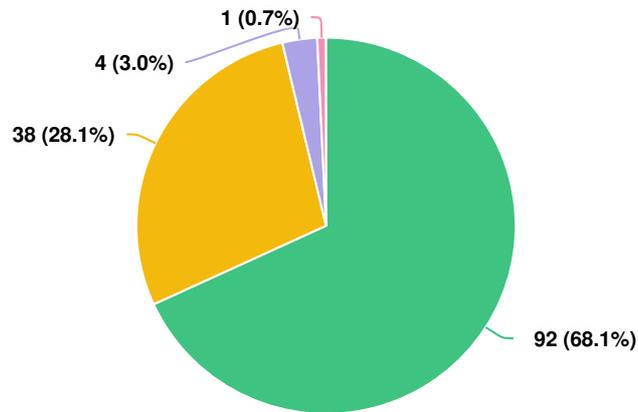
### **PROJECT NAME:**

Let's Talk Culture



# SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Q1** | What is your gender?

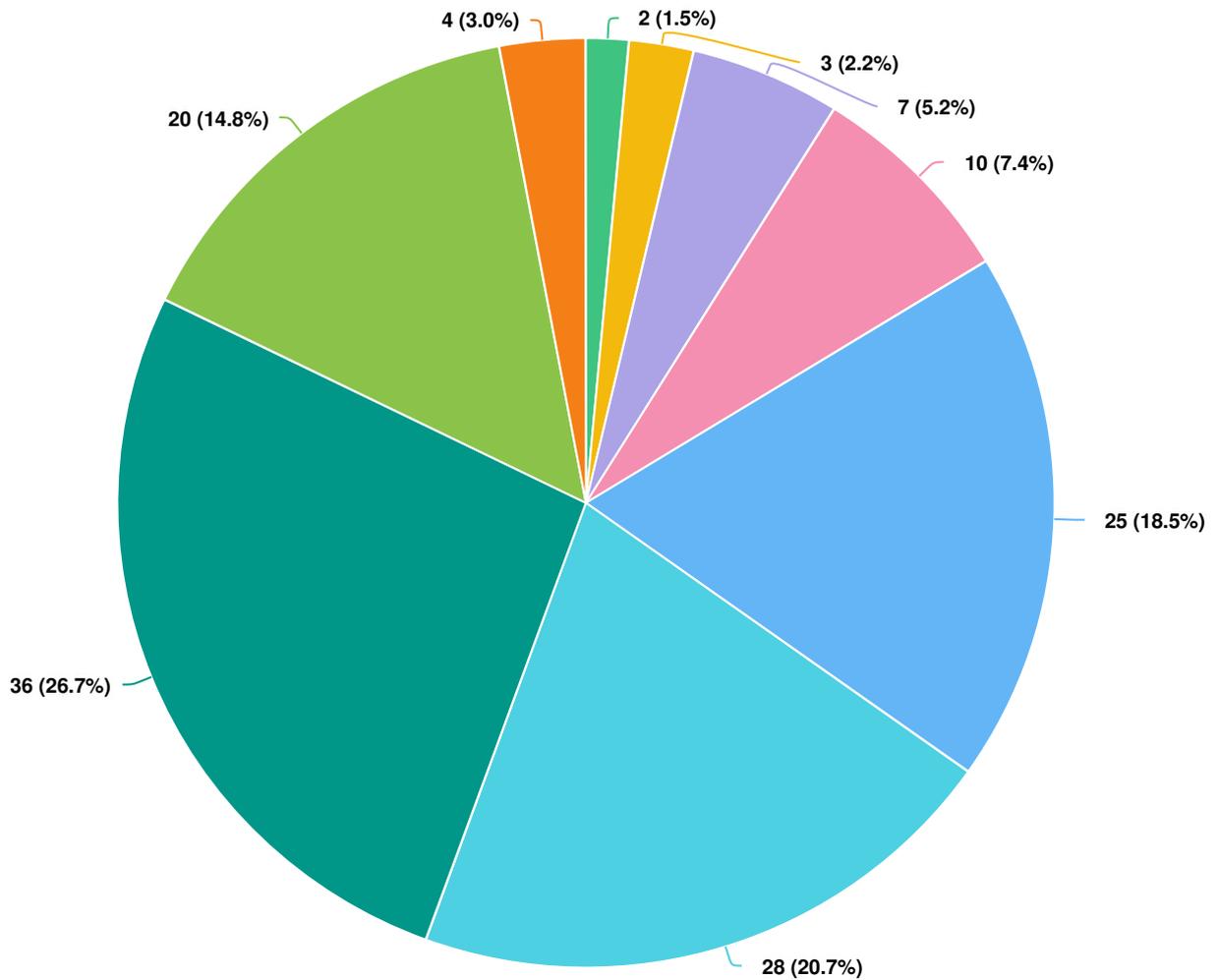


**Question options**

● Female   ● Male   ● Prefer to not to say   ● Prefer to self-describe

*Mandatory Question (135 response(s))*  
*Question type: Dropdown Question*

Q2 What age group do you fall within?

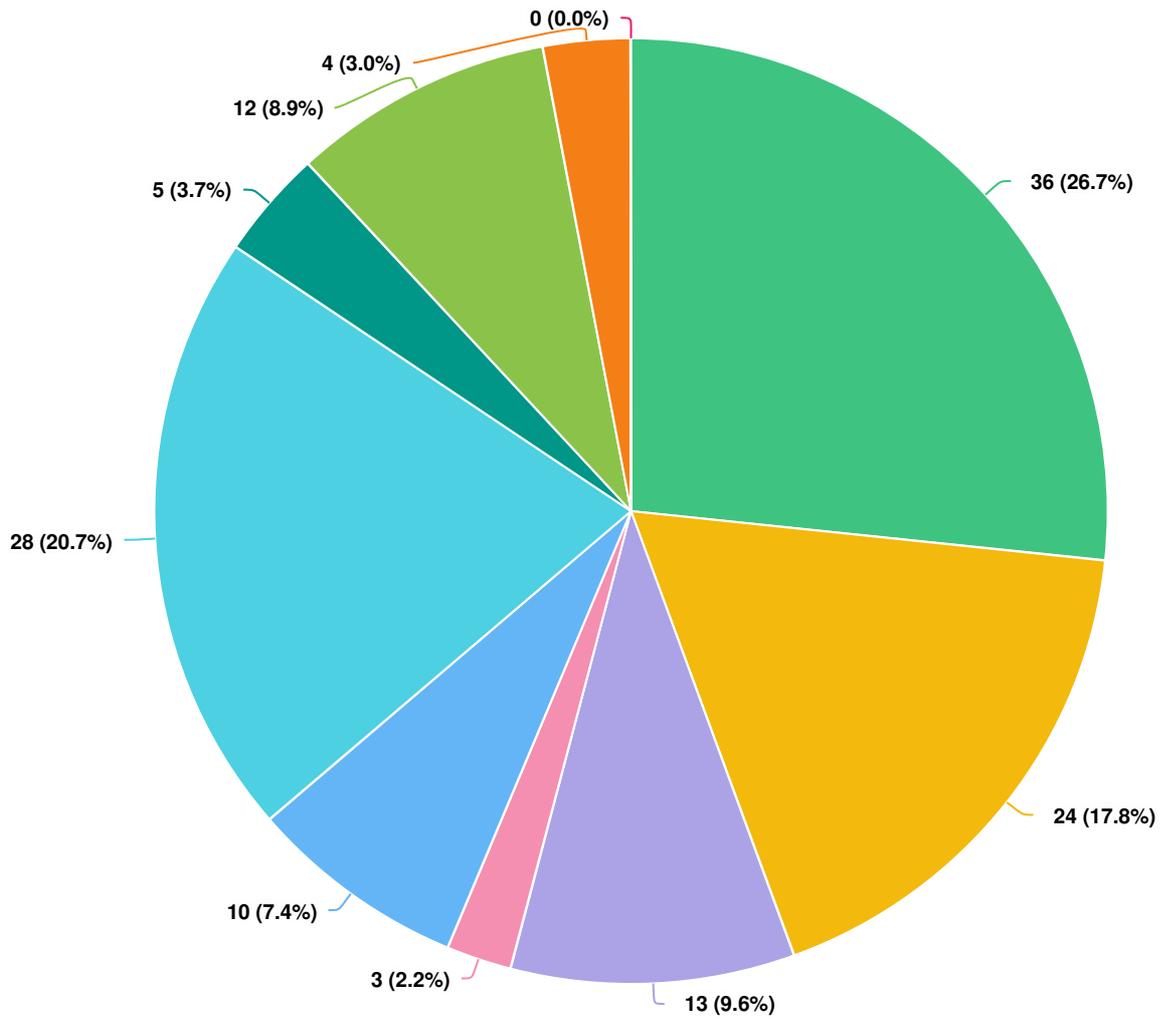


Question options

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

Mandatory Question (135 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

**Q3** Firstly, please can you tell us your nearest town or village. Your answer will enable us to identify any themes or popular views that emerge in specific areas of the county.

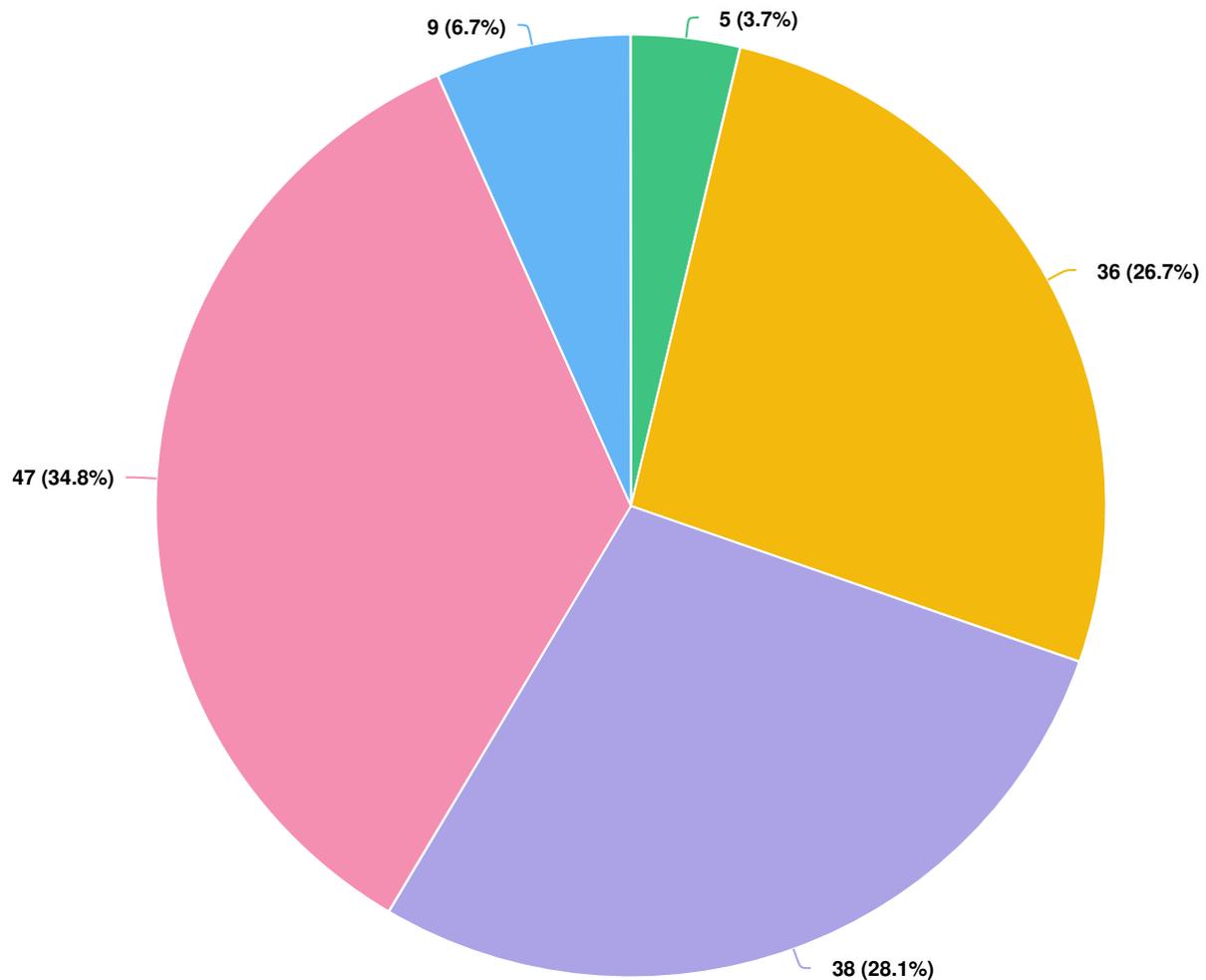


**Question options**

- Abergavenny
- Caldicot
- Chepstow
- Gilwern
- Magor with Undy
- Monmouth
- Raglan
- Usk
- Prefer not to say
- Tintern

Mandatory Question (135 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

**Q4** How often do you take part or access a cultural activity in Monmouthshire? \*This can include music, theatre, dance, art, crafts, history, etc

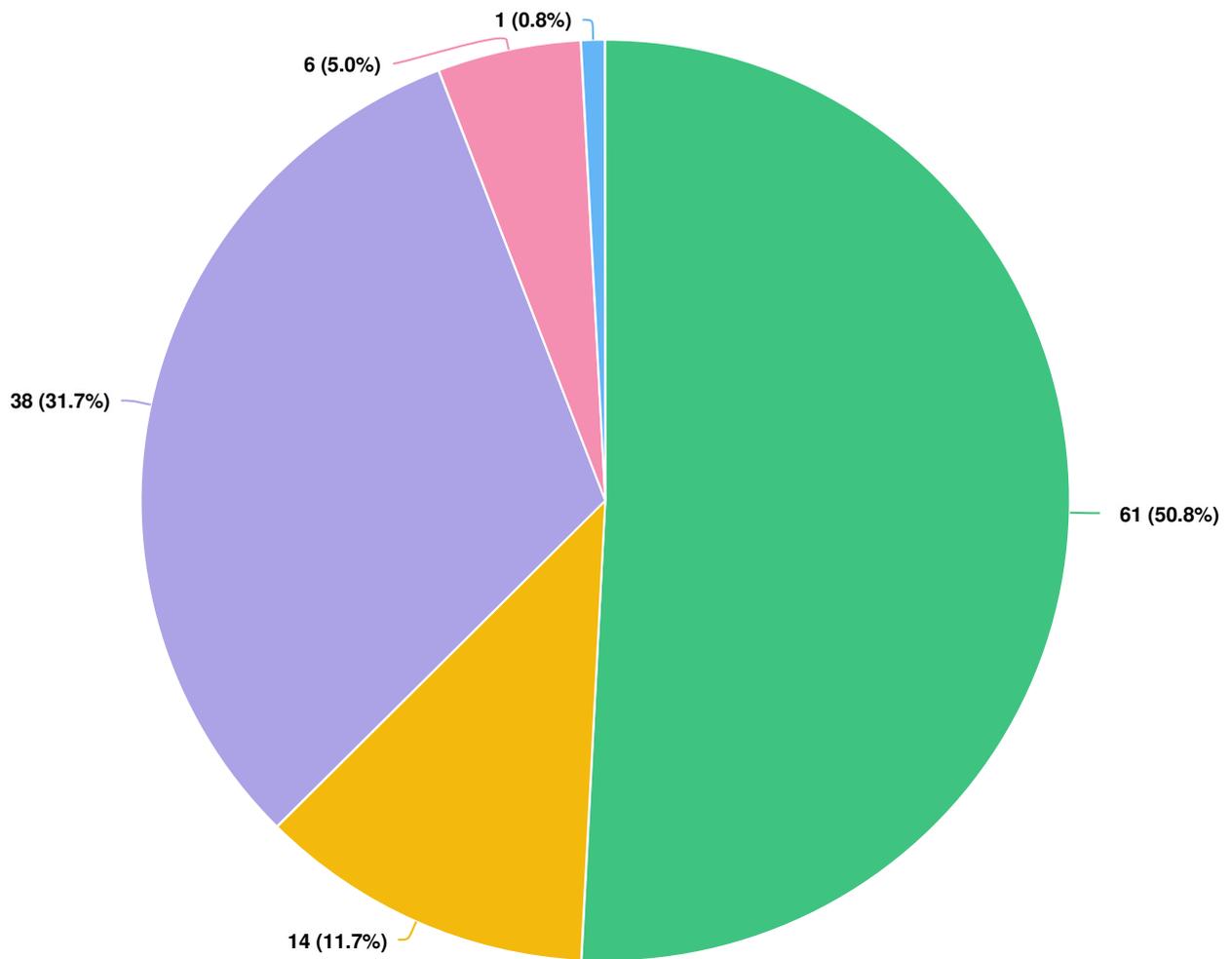


**Question options**

- Every day
- A couple of times a week
- A couple of times a month
- A few times in a year
- Never

Mandatory Question (135 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

**Q5** If you participated in a cultural activity in the last month, where did it happen?

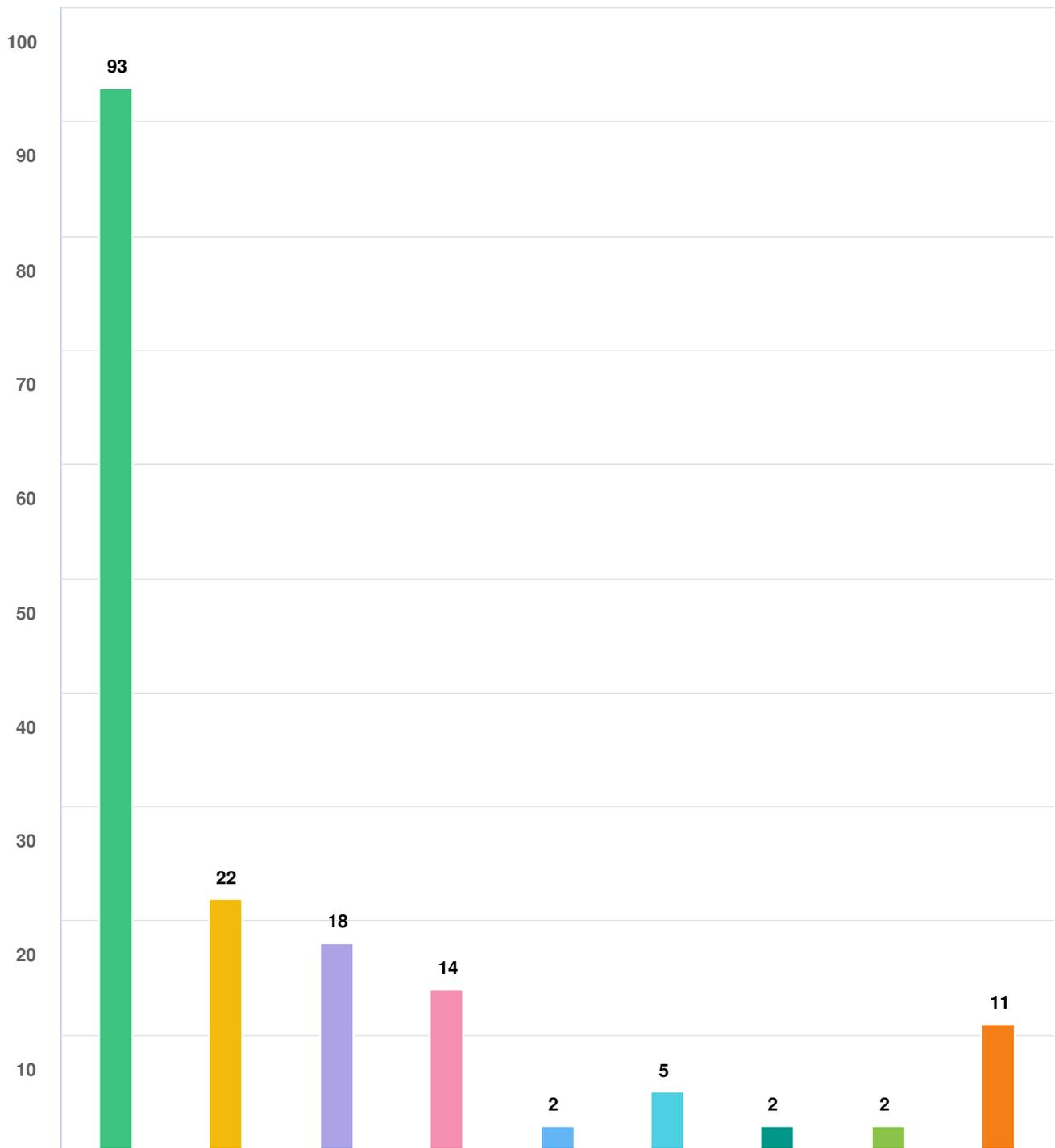


**Question options**

- My local village/town
- Elsewhere in Wales
- Within Monmouthshire
- Elsewhere in the UK
- Internationally

Optional question (120 response(s), 15 skipped)  
Question type: Dropdown Question

**Q6** At the last cultural event you attended, how did you take part? Tick as many as apply.



**Question options**

- As an audience member
- As a volunteer
- As a performer
- As an artist
- As a technician
- As a venue host
- As a hospitality provider
- As a retail provider
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (128 response(s), 7 skipped)  
Question type: Checkbox Question

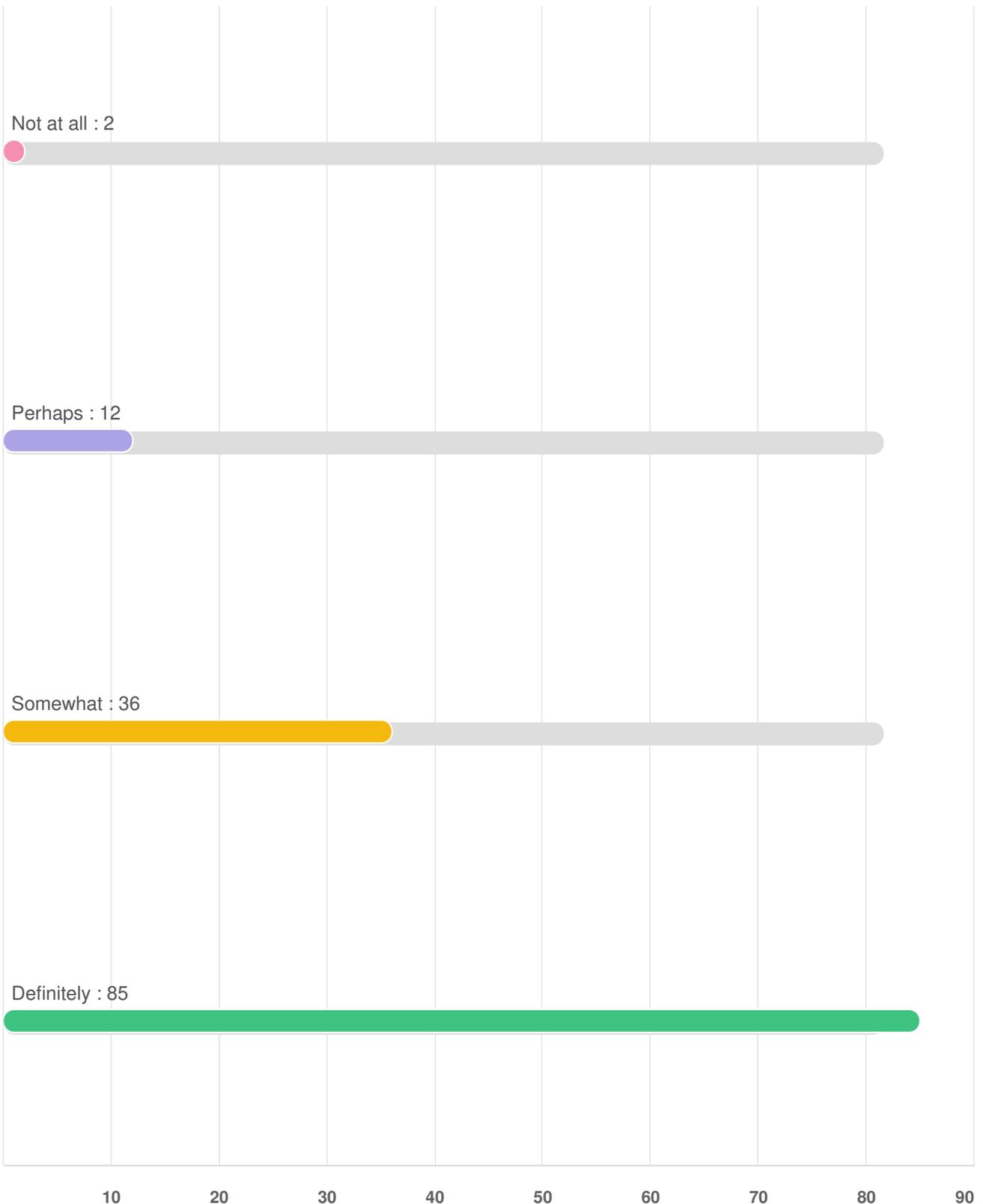
**Q7** Please let us know what encourages you to take part/access cultural activities. What are the things that motivate you?



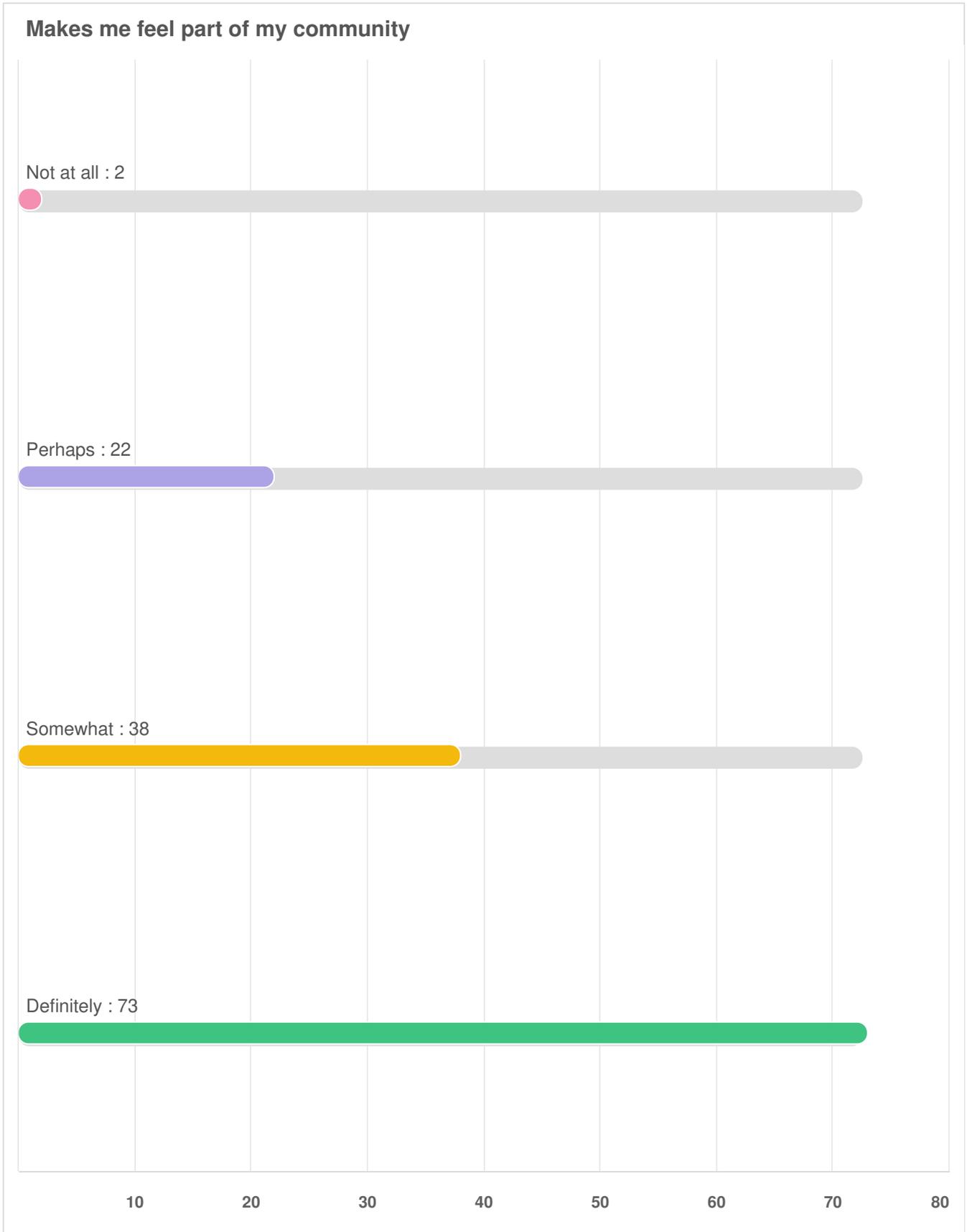
Mandatory Question (135 response(s))  
Question type: Likert Question

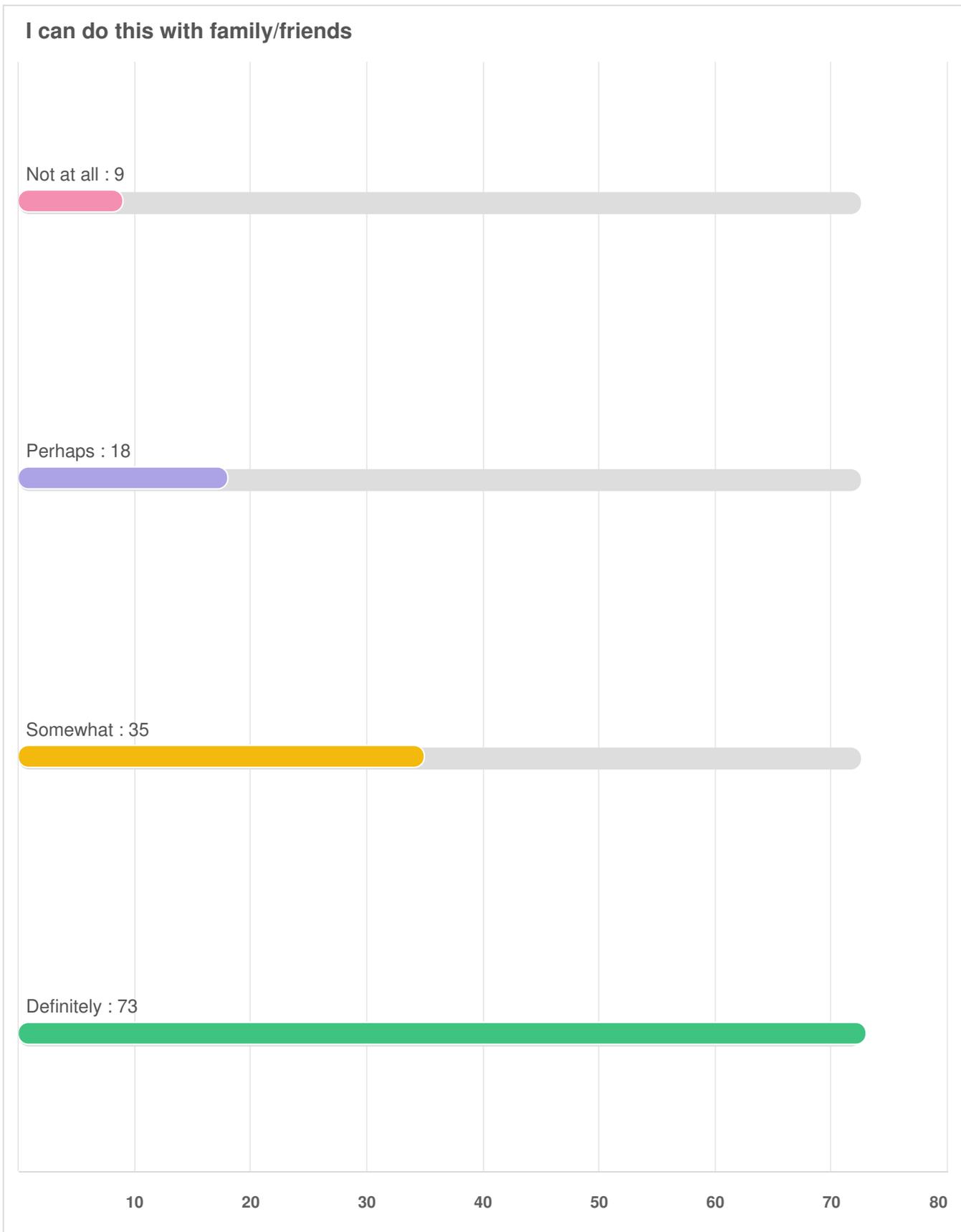
**Q7 | Please let us know what encourages you to take part/access cultural activities. What are the things that motivate you?**

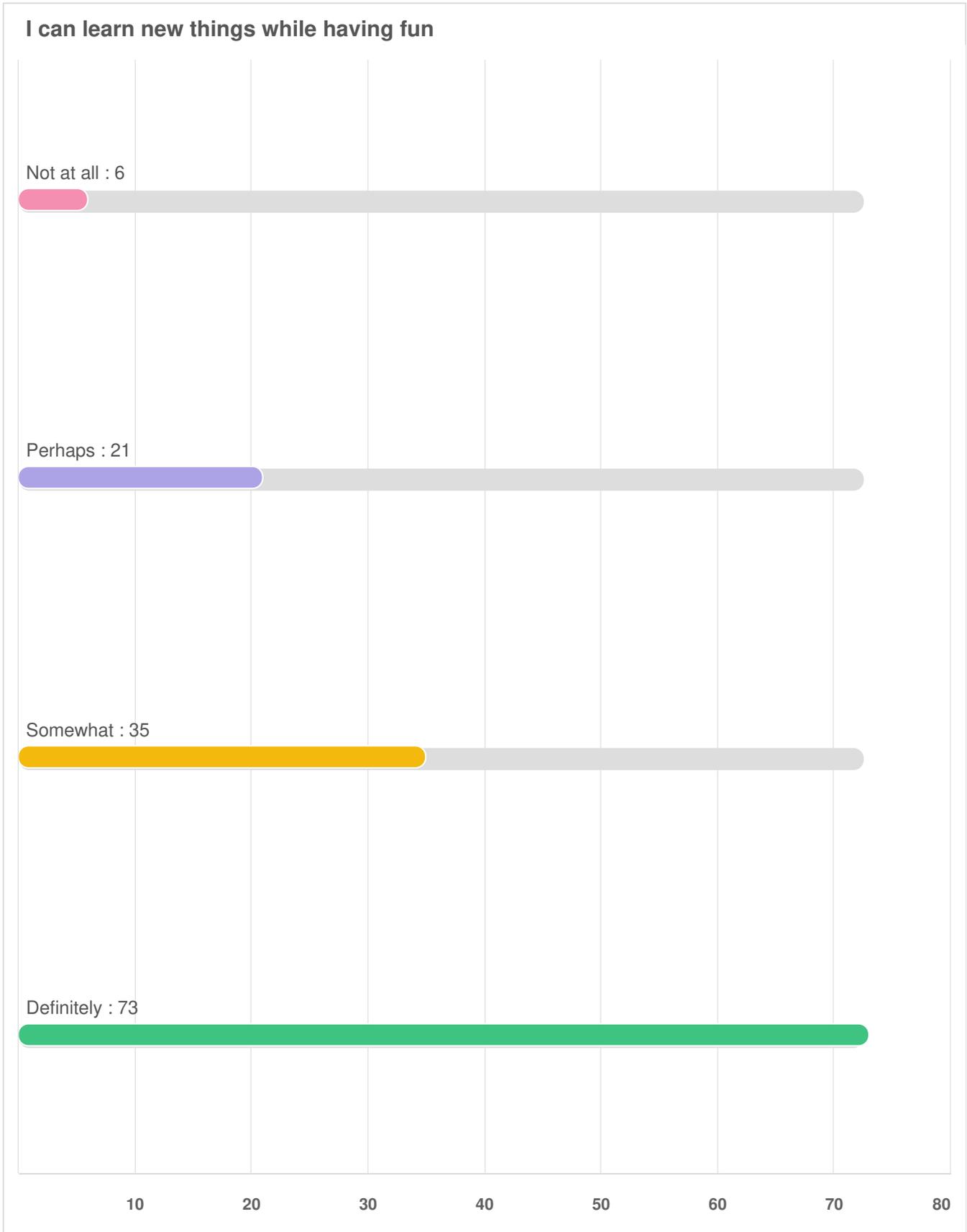
**Gives me a sense of well-being**

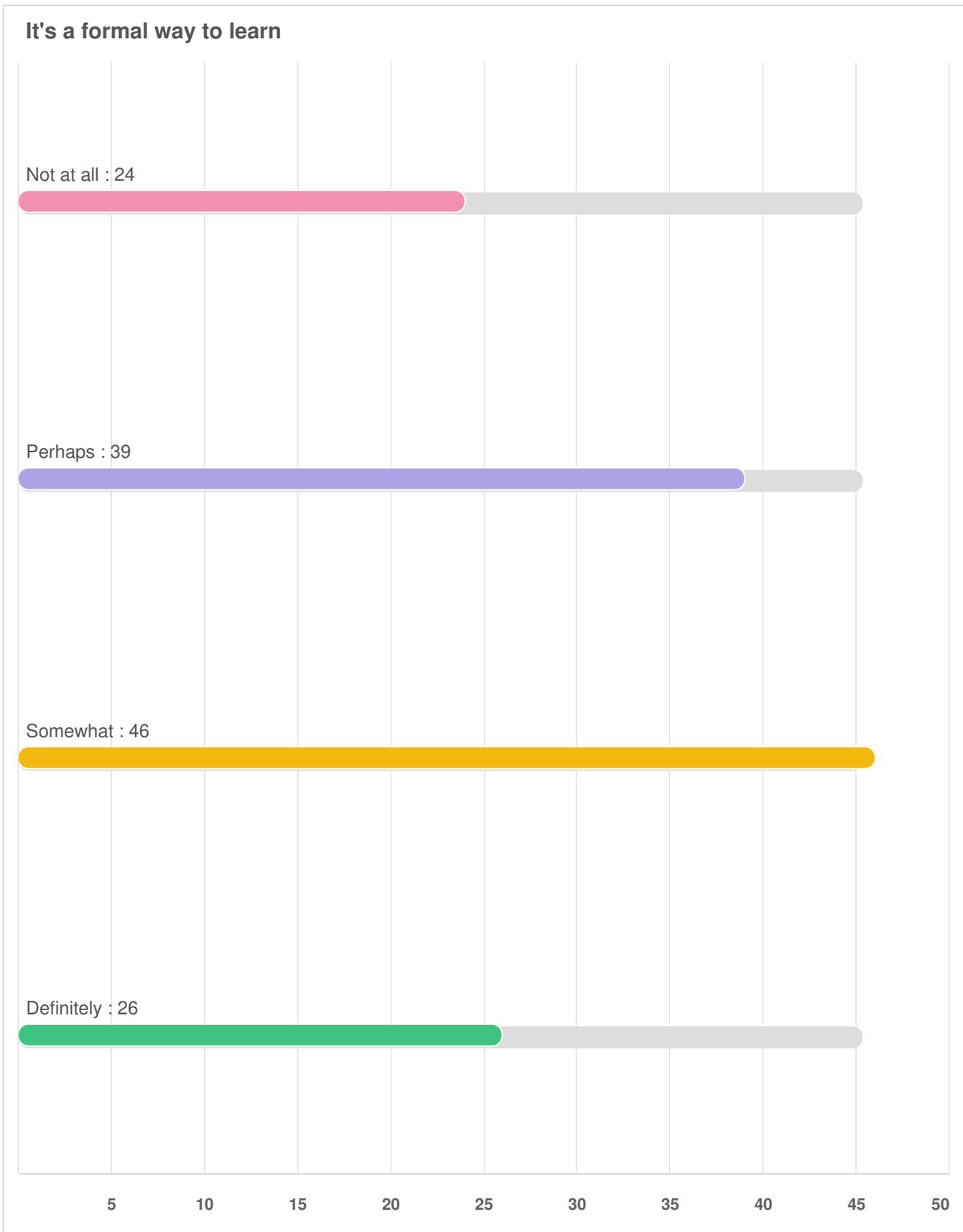


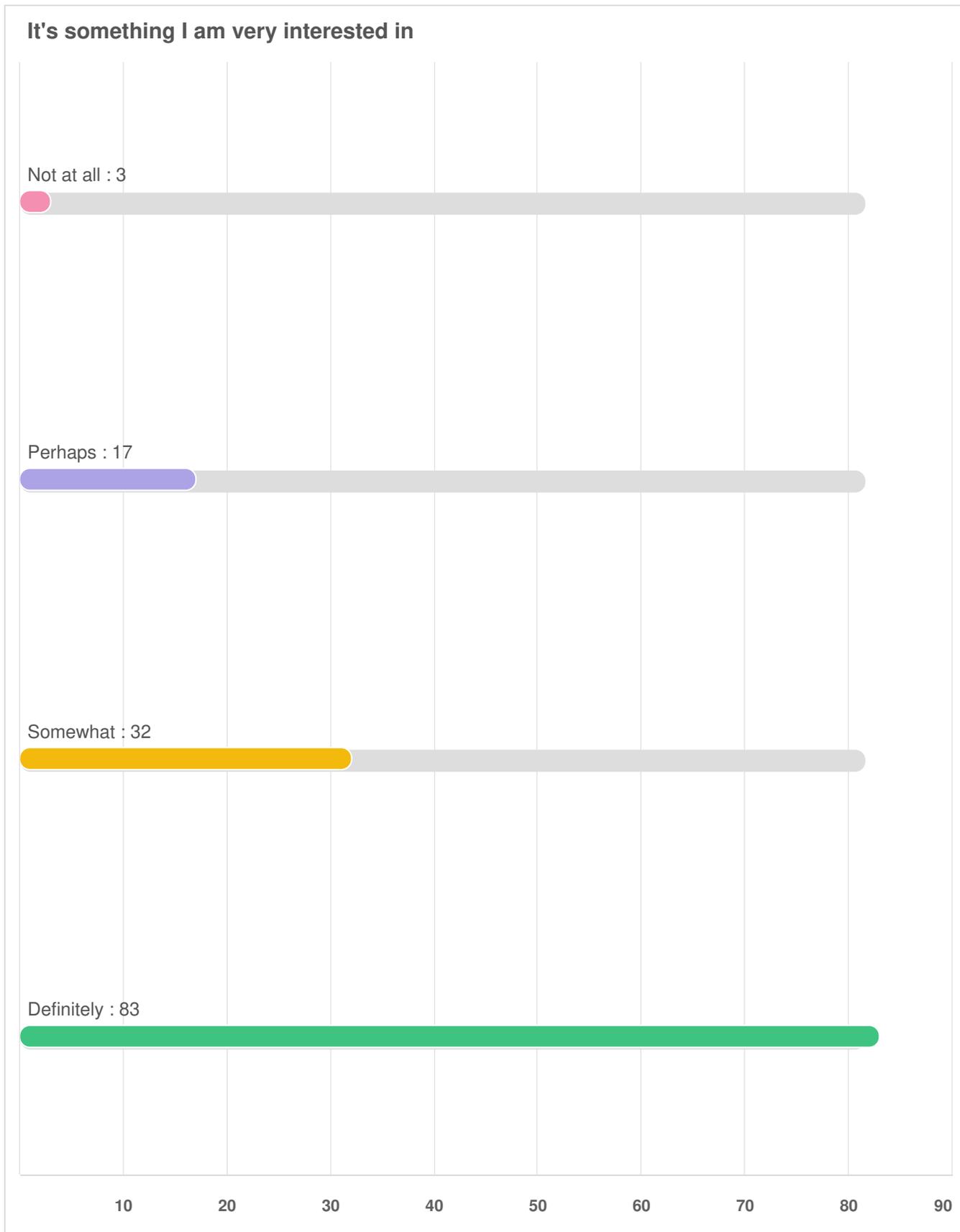


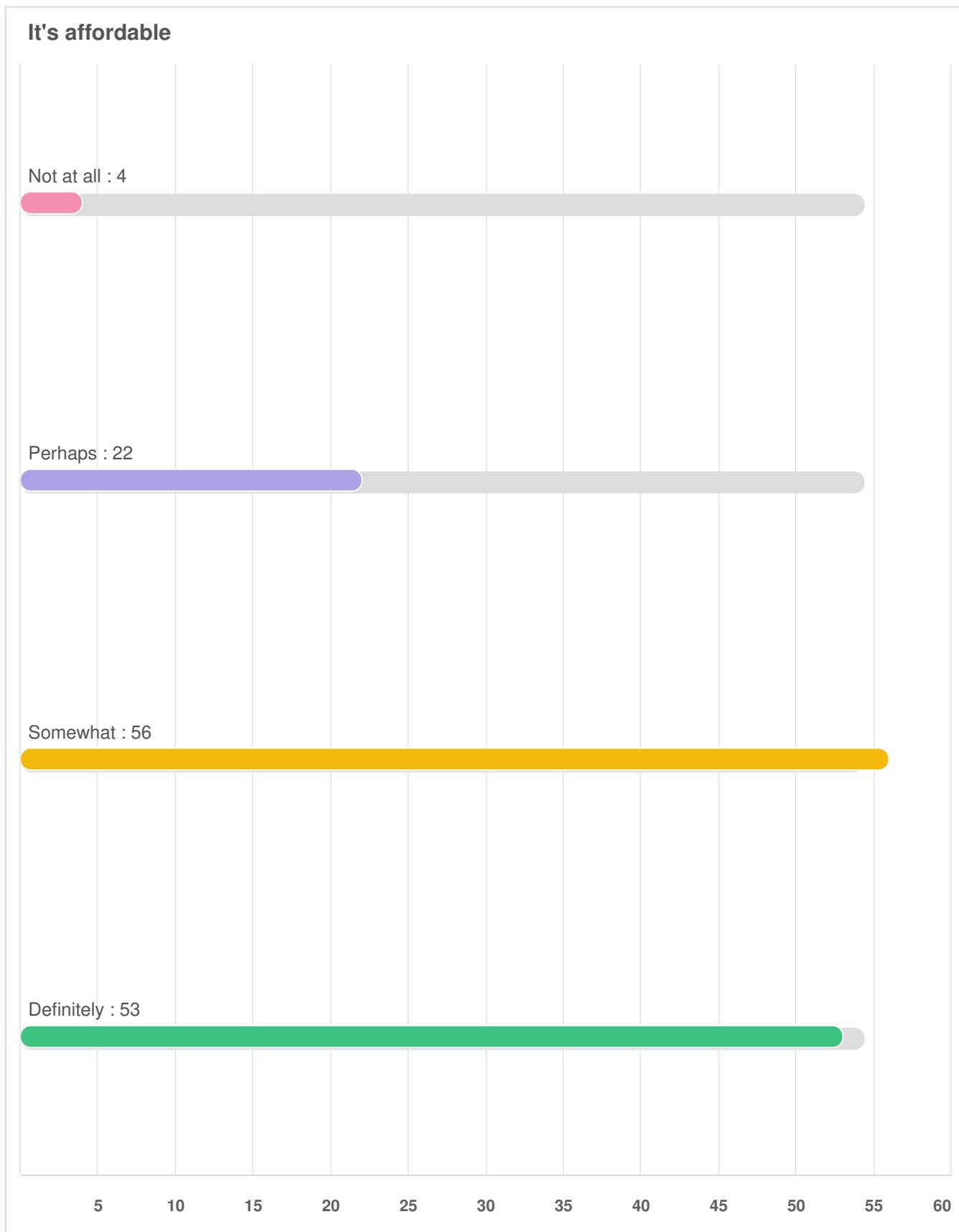


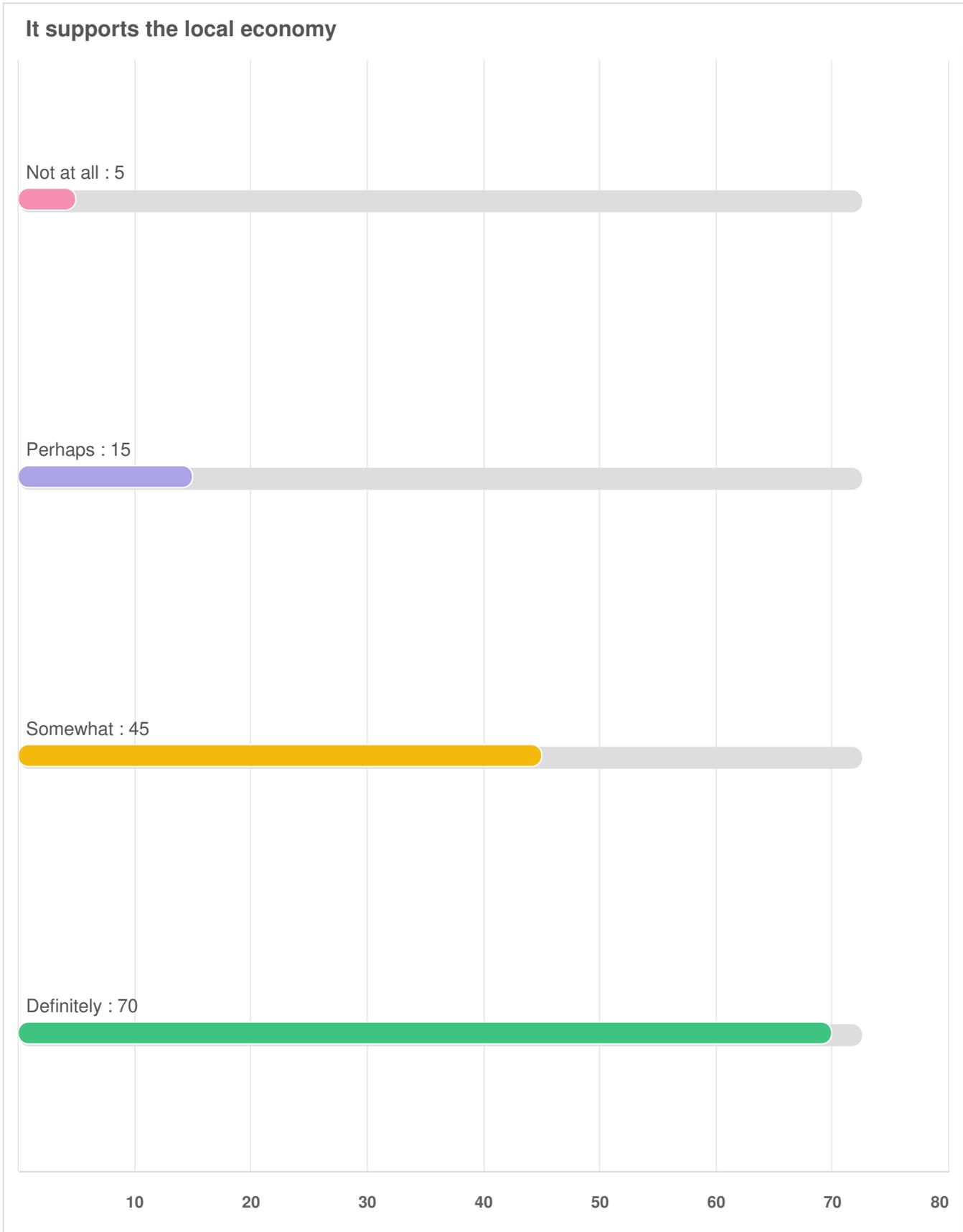




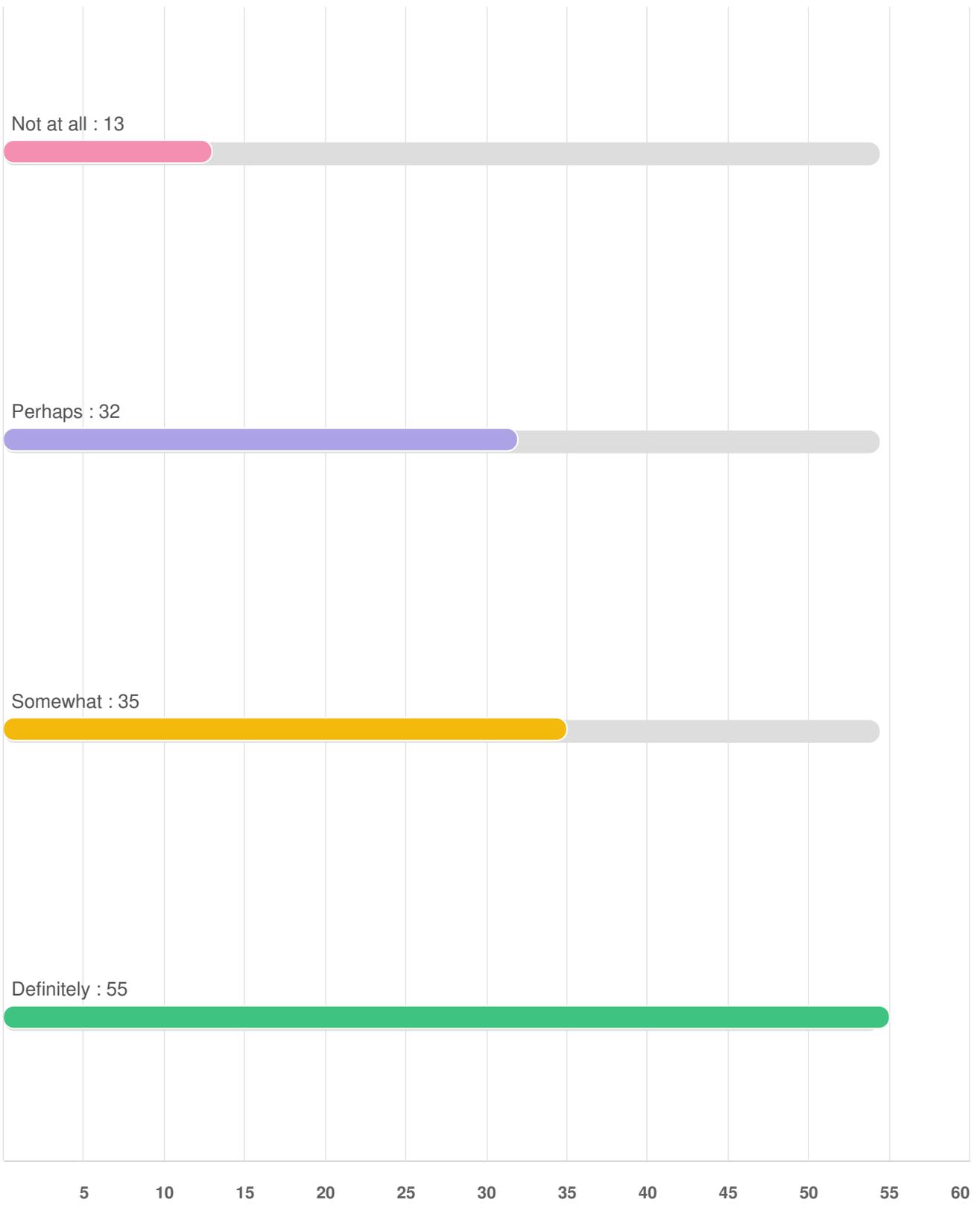








### I can make new friends with shared interests



**Q8 | What do you think are our cultural strengths - what makes Monmouthshire Monmouthshire? Help us define what is special about Monmouthshire and how this impacts cultural activity, people and places.**

- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 09:07 AM  
The people - very important to keep making events that will keep people gathering together
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 09:46 AM  
History, sometimes food. Music
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 09:52 AM  
Amazing music heritage with Rockfield and Monnow Valley Studios  
Historically significant
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 09:55 AM  
Landscape, history, heritage.
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 12:00 PM  
There's a vibrant participatory music scene, encouraging to all ability levels - with good performance spaces (mainly pubs)
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 12:28 PM  
the link between the countryside and art
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 01:09 PM  
history
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 02:38 PM  
Things that bring community engagement
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 03:02 PM  
Like-minded people who care not just about culture but about one another. Kindness and eschewing aggression in contact with others. A particular concern for Wales and Welshness (in both Welsh and English languages).
- Anonymous  
10/31/2025 03:58 PM  
Historic buildings - connects us to our heritage Youth performances (such as Monmouth Comp, Mayhem theatre) - brings the community together and celebrates the talents of our young people Community events (such as Monmouth Carnival, Lantern Parade, Remembrance Parade etc) - brings the community together and events such as the Lantern Parade enables people to explore their creative side.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:45 PM

Monmouthshire feels split, north and south so don't really consider it to be one entity.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

Monmouthshire is a vibrant and diverse area. In Monmouth itself we have cinemas theatres, and a host of cultural and artistic events, especially encouraged by U3A among others. It is sad to see the decline in literacy and in particular the downgrading of libraries. Libraries staffed by professionals provide the backbone to literacy which in turn allows one to access theatre and other cultural events. Above all they were free and inclusive. Fortunately we have enough people in the area to proceed intellectual and cultural stimulation on a number of fronts,

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

It has (had) border influences with a crossover Welsh/English influence which makes it's heritage and culture a little different (though difficult to define). Strengths include youngish incomers combining with older valleys culture. A lot of very talented young people here!

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:01 AM

Lots of artistic people, arts shops, food festival, film society, independent bookshop, community activities. Some of these activities promote a sense of place, connection to nature, Welsh heritage, but also some are more forward looking and celebrate diversity and connection to the world beyond Wales.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:09 AM

Museum Galleries community spaces Theatre

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

Variety and local venues

Anonymous

11/01/2025 10:49 AM

Museums, history, local art & craft groups

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

Castles, agriculture, its towns.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:24 PM

Monmouthshire's special character comes from the way its natural beauty, heritage, and creative communities all intertwine. The area's stunning green spaces — from rolling hills and community gardens to riverside walks and ancient castles — provide both inspiration and a

sense of wellbeing for residents and visitors alike.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:58 PM

Art workshops classes exhibitions. Writing opportunities..Music from choirs to participate in and listen to and orchestral. Enjoyment of landscape and walking.. Local WI and history groups for interesting talks, research, and friendship. Live theatre in a beautiful theatre building. Above all, peace and no huge crowds.

[REDACTED]

11/01/2025 12:59 PM

The strategy doesn't define 'culture', so i can't answer this

[REDACTED]

11/01/2025 01:29 PM

Diversity of talent within the population is impressive. Lots of good venues both closed and open

Anonymous

11/01/2025 01:44 PM

Our history and geography: castles, canals, mountains, religious sites and ruins, historic pubs and ghost stories. Our bands (Abergavenny town band to local pop/rock) and lively music scene.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 03:25 PM

Abergavenny has a varied programme of cultural events which take place at the Borough, Theatre, the Chapel, St Mary's and other local churches . These include concerts, plays talks on a variety of topics and now National Theatre Screenings.

[REDACTED]

11/01/2025 07:45 PM

It has a long history that is written in its beautiful landscape and towns. It straddles the cultural border between England and Wales, having a foot in both, and retaining its Marcher heritage. It incorporates a number of growing and increasingly affluent towns, which can support cultural events and thrive with them.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 07:51 PM

Church bell ringing Musical activities in churches such as choirs, organ and piano music

Anonymous

11/01/2025 11:54 PM

The people of Monmouthshire are at the centre of Welsh cultural activity and should not have a false national identity imposed upon them.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Local groups and historic locations.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 05:08 PM

The landscape, locally based producers and creatives, potential for recreational walking of all types

Anonymous

11/03/2025 07:33 AM

No comment

Anonymous

11/03/2025 10:06 AM

Variety of classes available

Anonymous

11/03/2025 02:59 PM

People are inspired by the landscape and history of Monmouthshire, and this creates a strong network of artists, musicians and performers.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 06:45 PM

As a tourist town Abergavenny welcomes visitors and tourists As a twinned town Abergavenny engages with Beaupreau in France and Ostringen in Germany with cultural exchanges Abergavenny is becoming a multi cultural town

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

No. Monmouthshire is a beautiful, rural county but doesn't seem to have much going for it culturally, except in what is safe and familiar. It is quite insular and 'conservative'. You would have to look very hard to find anything contemporary, edgy, provocative or 'cutting edge'. This lack is reinforced by the extraordinary absence of cultural or racial diversity. In the county, this bizarre and particular cultural flavour reinforces its obvious cultural insularity.

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:26 PM

It is difficult to answer this question by taking Monmouthshire as a whole because apart from the obvious (rural landscapes, castles), the different parts of the county are so different from each other.

Anonymous

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

History

Anonymous

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

The people first - and the landscape second. We share characteristics with many places and it would be wrong to only think of the 'county level'. Our village (closest is Raglan but our orientation is towards Usk) is different from others close by and the same as others far flung. Richness and diversity is lost when homogenising or generalising. Your descriptors of where cultural activity happens is an example of that. What about places like 'home', the pub, the school, the street, the market ...??

Anonymous

11/08/2025 06:02 PM

Vibrant communities in small towns lend themselves to wide participation, instead of passively attending major events. It's fun, and a chance to meet up with friends, in addition to the actual 'culture' ingredient.

Anonymous

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

Monmouthshire is set in an historical and uniquely special landscape which enables our folk law, legends, history and culture to thrive.

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

Beautiful scenery and heritage as a filming location for major screen projects. History of literary inspiration and connection, eg Tolkien, Wordsworth, Arthur Machen. Links to major historical events and figures, eg Lord Nelson. Distinctive Georgian architecture in key towns. Music heritage, eg Rockfield Studios. Monmouthshire has been at the heart of Welsh and UK culture for generations, a border and a bridge.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

Monmouth has gone from an industrial / farming area to a dormitory / retirement / cultural area in my lifetime . Monmouthshire has always responded well to change . Our Museums and castles , abbeys and historic buildings are famous. We have craft / sport activities for all ages.

Anonymous

11/15/2025 09:12 AM

Landscape, communities, creativity

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

Lots and lots of successful of local groups offering huge range of activities and covering very varied interests. Access to film and theatre and bigger cultural hubs.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 07:22 AM

Rich history and access to venues that enable families and friends to attend together

Anonymous

11/17/2025 08:09 PM

Scenery, towns, cultural vibrancy.

  
11/18/2025 12:47 AM

I dont know I never find out about things

Anonymous

11/18/2025 03:36 PM

Rich history in Museums & Castles. Rivers & scenery.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

Landscape, history - contrasts: industrial v rural, Romans to 21st century

[REDACTED]

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Traditional Architecture Design Codes- Please see my PDF Umbrella Representation emailed previously.

Anonymous

11/19/2025 09:33 PM

The sense of community and the beautiful countryside.

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:20 PM

Diversity

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:39 PM

Several theatres, a lot of history, local societies and groups like drama and choirs. This attracts people to the area and gives current residents activities to participate in.

Anonymous

11/22/2025 11:19 AM

Lively cultural environment but also surrounded by beautiful countryside with good transport links

Anonymous

11/23/2025 04:06 AM

It's an agricultural area right next to the South Wales coalfield that led industrial Britain. It has escaped the decline of the valleys where I was born. It's beautiful and rich in history

Anonymous

11/23/2025 09:07 PM

Open - both the landscape and the people

Anonymous

11/24/2025 06:21 PM

Monmouthshire has a long history of supporting culture, whether it be music gigs, am dram, dance or comedy, whether it be on an amateur to professional basis. This should be supported going forward as it's importance cannot be underestimated.

Anonymous

11/26/2025 08:28 AM

It needs improving!

Anonymous

11/27/2025 11:40 AM

History Cultural Social

Anonymous

The landscape - our appreciation of it shapes the way we interact,

11/27/2025 02:42 PM

appreciate the world around us, and create Informal community connections - in a rural area, that's culturally underfunded, serendipity and chance play a big part in how our cultural activity is shaped Musical heritage - particularly around the studios and the huge cultural ripple effect, and the perception of the area by modern music fans

Anonymous

11/27/2025 06:28 PM

Landscape, people, language

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

Variety of choice of local opportunities, from theatre to comedy, music, crafts, history etc all with access within walking/bus/cycling distance. Improved evening buses would help to access offers further afield

Anonymous

11/29/2025 05:25 PM

Monmouthshire has beautiful scenery and I appreciate the walks organised by Mark Langley, soon to be transferred to Chepstow Walkers, an innovative idea to organise walks by the County Council. MCC supports local initiatives: eg the Friends' groups for the green spaces in Abergavenny MCC supported the Eisteddfod in 2 MCC supports local groups with a pride in the Community eg Keep Abergavenny Tidy good links with Abergavenny Town Council and Wales in Bloom

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

Our boarder identity makes us and our history interesting. Links to feelings of belonging and loyalty across man made boarder. Rural life / our rivers / thriving sustainable farming / history of the boarders / food and craft / beautiful countryside

Anonymous

12/02/2025 07:01 PM

Good local theatres

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:01 PM

What used to be special was the amount of children singing and playing instruments at school. That was before all the funding was cut to schools and music services. Chepstow School USED to be a Gwent Music Music Centre pre covid, with many different orchestras and ensembles there. Now, there are NONE. It is no longer a Music centre. The school has completely lost all of this wonderful emerging culture. It's gone. On your watch!

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

Open, friendly nature

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

Rich history, great food, beautiful landscapes. Lots of good outdoor activity and a really good balance of rural life and good travel links.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

The communities of Monmouthshire and adjoining co-communities are special with our own histories and friendships. This is authentic culture of peoples living and working together across the imaginary boundaries between counties and countries. This is a genuine local culture, language and identity and not an assumed or imposed value of life from elsewhere. Monmouthshire is at the heart of Wales and all Welsh culture and the national identity should use Monmouthshire heritage and values as the model for all. Kindness and inclusivity are the hallmarks of our communities. We can do without the hostility offered by so many living outside our county. Unfortunately we are not at the heart of the considerations of our elected representatives in either of our Parliaments. We struggle to show our values without a voice.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

Monmouthshire has culture, theatres, shops, cafes, restaurants (have you tried Creates in Church Street, Monmouth!!!) parks, community centres and so much more. There's always something happening.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 07:01 PM

The landscape, when I think of Monmouthshire I think of the landscape, rivers, castles, viewpoints

Anonymous

12/06/2025 08:37 AM

What makes Monmouthshire special is the country village feel, the rural areas and nature. All of which you are doing your best to destroy. We don't want to be Bristol. We don't want to be Newport. We want to be villages and nature. We don't want you to build houses everywhere and turn this county into the slums. Not everyone can and should live in Monmouthshire. Stop destroying this area. Stop taking land to build awful housing estate. Spend money in the town centres. Renovate buildings and convert existing empty buildings in the centres to house people. Not every one can and should have a house. Apartments are perfectly fine to live in. Especially if you can't afford your own home. Look at how other countries are doing this. You are slowly destroying nature and the special feel about Monmouthshire and you're going against what people from the area want. Please stop.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 09:38 AM

The history, the built environment and the landscape. People interested enough to organise events. A good smattering of museums.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 10:01 AM

I think you will find culture wherever you find people. Monmouthshire is no different in this but many of its people are living in fairly remote places so coming together to share in some activity that is not work but celebrates joy and beauty in life is incredibly important for wellbeing. Welsh people have for generations revered and celebrated the Arts and there is a need for this as a fabric to knit community together and make people stronger. The narrowing of the Elegant Monnow St has given town the "Cwmbran" effect and is the most destructive thing MCC has done culturally. Additionally the reduction in the roundabout size at st Thomas street horrendous leaving the cross without a pedestal that is of aesthetically pleasing proportions. This is also destructive of the culture that you talk about wanting to preserve? It has left a landmark statement reduced to an eye sore which will be damaged by heavy goods vehicles as they negotiate it. A huge example of failure is that dragonfly in Monmouth. There are local Monmouth Art groups and yet a woman from Newport is paid to design this? The ask from locals was to bring in old china to be incorporated!! Ive nothing against the work but Im afraid it was not created by a local artist or group of local artists its an example of a city dweller brought out to decorate the rural town as she feels fitting.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 06:24 PM

Apart from the beautiful landscape, the varied cultural interests of residents

Anonymous

12/07/2025 02:33 PM

Cultural heritage is one of the most special aspects. Its more than just castles and buildings but the people and stories that took place in and around them

Anonymous

12/07/2025 08:30 PM

Dance Blast is a massive cultural highlight for Monmouthshire. What they do there is incredible, and not something you would get in other towns of this size. So many people within the community benefit by participating in classes - all ages, abilities. Professional choreographers and performers share their skills and offer so much to the participants. It really is a very special organisation and one that needs further support and investment so they can expand what they do and offer.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 12:25 PM

Local community groups

Anonymous

12/08/2025 02:54 PM

A bridge between England and Wales.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 03:29 PM

As a border community our history is rich and diverse - and this is all around us. We are an area with lots of artists and makers many of whom are inspired by the location.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

as a boarder between countries and cultures there is space here to blend new ideas, and conjure new possibilities

Anonymous

12/09/2025 11:28 AM

Monmouthshire's farming heritage - sadly now under threat by Labour taxation plans.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

Monmouth in particular has a rich musical history. Yes, Rockfield Studios has played a huge part in this... but did you know about Monnow Valley Studio - my studio also in Rockfield village? Formerly part of Rockfield Studios but independent for the last 35 years and still hosting some of the biggest rock stars in the world. We also lead the way in promoting cultural tourism in Wales - as a residential studio, our guests come to us because they want to stay in the same rooms as Sir Tom Jones, Ozzy Osbourne, Liam Gallagher, David Bowie etc. They want to recreate sleeve covers from iconic bands in our live room and live like a rock star, albeit for a weekend. We host intimate events with musicians and their fans as well as supporting the next generation of artists with recording and rehearsal space. In doing all this, we pump tens, if not hundreds of thousands of pounds into the local economy. Our guests spend money in the town, contract in catering, book tables in restaurants, frequent pubs, use taxis, hire live musicians, book hotels and b n bs for additional accommodation, plus enable us to employ local support staff.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

A very diverse creative community in Monmouthshire. Some towns in Monmouthshire put on regular festivals, shows, special events and it enriches the local community and their experience of where they live.

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

The current strategy only lists a few festivals, it doesn't really demonstrate the breadth and depth of culture in Monmouthshire. There are lots of groups and multifunctional spaces of different kinds, with lots of local community members making culture a reality for everyone. Its the depth of community involvement in culture that makes Monmouthshire special and unlike other places.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 09:16 AM

History - lots of places to visit and enjoy. Helps with wellbeing

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

It close to me history

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

Wye Valley Very near F.O.P Monmouth is a very attractive town

Anonymous

12/15/2025 11:36 AM

Being Welsh helps Many Volunteering Opportunities

Difficult to say as it's a big county, very divided into North (Aber and Monmouth) and South (Caldicot and Chepstow)

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

The community ans shared connections, a strong sense of purpose

Anonymous

12/16/2025 11:31 AM

Very caring

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Gets people together enjoying the company of others and makes people feel part of the community

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

I think Monmouthshire's Welsh heritage is crucial to its identity. It has great industrial and agricultural heritage. Nant-y-glo, once in Monmouthshire, had one of the largest iron works in the world. Walking and outdoor activities are also key.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Beautiful buildings/history

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Difficult to define

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

History of the town and rural crafts. Welsh culture and customs.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Beautiful buildings, clean, inviting, friendly people

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:51 AM

It's a beautiful place to live in!

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:57 AM

The countryside is beautiful. The mountains, streams and rivers provide endless inspiration for artists and creative people. Also there is great community spirit and a great sense of history.

Anonymous

12/19/2025 01:45 PM

Unspoiled Heritage and scenery - the Wye Valley, mountains, Mons & Brecon canal. Lovely old towns, old churches and castle, coastline, history and heritage, the range of different places and habitats to explore.

[REDACTED]

12/19/2025 01:07 PM

Trefi marchnad hanesyddol, cynefin naturiol gwefreiddiol

**Optional question** (101 response(s), 34 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

**Q9 | What are the three most exciting things happening in your area, or that you are involved in that you regard as cultural at the moment?**

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:07 AM

Food festival - theatre plays around the community - Thursday food festivals

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:46 AM

To get a cinema in Abergavenny - a proper one.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:52 AM

Savoy theatre Rockfield studios Creative writing classes

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:55 AM

Abergavenny food festival My daughter working for a local sculptor  
The local pub runs events - trellech

Anonymous

10/31/2025 10:23 AM

Occasional events in the village hall

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:00 PM

Open mic events at The Queen's Head Micropub, Chepstow Acoustic  
Showcase evenings at Chepstow Art Space Forthcoming Gwyl Hwyl  
Casgwent - Welsh Fun Festival next summer

Anonymous

Wye valley River festival, Monmouth lantern parade, Monmouth

10/31/2025 12:28 PM

museum

Anonymous

10/31/2025 01:09 PM

Shakespeare in the castle

Anonymous

10/31/2025 02:38 PM

Raglan Day Raglan Festival Both enjoyable days

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:02 PM

Abergavenny Borough Theatre, Art society, and just the buzz of Abergavenny on market days.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:45 PM

None

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

U3A provides a rich menu of experiences, the Blake Theatre provides an equally diverse range of options, as does the Savoy. I attend Monmouth History Society meeting on a monthly basis.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

Potential for a circus/aerial dance hub of regional importance in Abergavenny in a building that combines with community cinema (funding/planning early stages). Project to gain gender equality of art books in libraries Embryonic project 'Art for Words' for artists to support other artists.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:01 AM

Food Festival Green Man festival Live events at Chapel and Melville Theatre

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:09 AM

Art group Theatre

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

Bookish events,talks and film/book club Melville Centre Borough Theatre

Anonymous

11/01/2025 10:49 AM

Apart from film night & pub I cannot think of anything else in village.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

Bonfire celebrations. Visit a castle when it's on a free day. Visit Abergavenny and Monmouth.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:24 PM

The festivals- such as Food festival Facilities- such as the castle grounds The rich range of shops and makers - market/ street market

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:58 PM

Art,music and interest events at the Chapel Arts Centre in Abergavenny. Walking groups at different levels. Dance events at the Melville.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 01:44 PM

The Abergavenny food festival although I strongly believe there should be a much larger emphasis on local producers and suppliers. I am looking forward to visiting the canal lantern walk advertised beginning at Llanfoist. The AM festival is a brilliant local community event.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 03:25 PM

Arst Society lectures National Theatre Screenings Local History Society

Anonymous

11/01/2025 07:51 PM

Monmouth Medieval Festival Monmouth Show Volunteering at Goodrich Castle (just across the border in Herefordshire)

Bell ringing - I am part of a team which ring in my local church and we almost define the identity of the village. We are part of the Llandaff & Monmouth DACBR, an organisation for church bell and handbell method ringers in South Wale Welsh Traditional Music - I am a member of a tune group (part of a nationwide network supported bt CLERA). We meet in pubs and also perform in open gardens and churches. Morris Dancing - I am a member of Isca Morris who perform at many events in Monmouthshire including the Mari Llwyd in Chepstow (this event is mentioned in the consultation but does not mention morris dancing - it shoud)

Anonymous

11/01/2025 11:54 PM

Karaoke

Anonymous

11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Illustrated Gwent Wildlife talks, amateur dramatics, history talks.

Anonymous

Local festivals/shows, strong civic links to heritage and local history

11/02/2025 05:08 PM

Anonymous

I am unable to be involved

11/03/2025 07:33 AM

Anonymous

New management of the Melville Theatre - with the right funding, this could be a first-class arts centre. Discussions re: an arts festival in Abergavenny - the people are willing, the money is a problem!  
Abergavenny Food Festival and Night Market

11/03/2025 02:59 PM

Anonymous

Chairman of Abergavenny and Beaupreau Twinning Association - looking forward to major celebration of 40 years twinning with Beaupreau in 2028, and football festival in Abergavenny in 2026.  
Abergavenny Petanque club Abergavenny local history society

11/03/2025 06:45 PM

Anonymous

?

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

Anonymous

1.Local History activities (including talks, visits, walks, displays)through Local History Societies. 2.Activities in local library (poetry sessions, quiz nights, author events etc). 3. Quiz nights.

11/06/2025 06:26 PM

Anonymous

There is very little - I can't think of anything in Caldicot

11/06/2025 09:01 PM

Anonymous

May Fayre Frost Fayre Remembrance

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

Anonymous

WI - campaigning against violence against women and girls - protest banners - events. My own practice shared well beyond the county boundaries (I was showing in Australia earlier in 2025) Courses run by local artists - sharing talent

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

Anonymous

Multiple recorder groups to join and perform with Frequent classical concerts Film club every fortnight through the winter

11/08/2025 06:02 PM

Anonymous

development of the Usk Band

11/10/2025 03:51 PM

Anonymous

Linking Wales Coast Path to King Charles route in England.  
Developing programme of access improvements with CADW to

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

enable better access and care of castles and SAM's. Clydach Ironworks Gateway Project Enabling volunteers to maintain their paths and promote legends/hstory and features in their communities as a result.

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

Monmouth local music and drama group for children, Sparrows run by Rhian Hathaway, bringing young people together for a high standard of music and drama. Shire Hall Monmouth museum collections. Monmouth Bee Festival.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

Repositioning the Nelson Collection in to the Shire Hall . Creative crafts happening in the Rolls Hall Library ( hub) The River / Medieval / Christmas Festivals .

Anonymous

11/14/2025 07:16 PM

The addition of NT live theatre shows at the Borough Theatre. Melville arts centre and Danceblast Having a local cinema in abergavenny

Anonymous

11/15/2025 09:12 AM

Regenerating a market in another county Comedy nights Music venues

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

Pottery studio which I use twice a week in very rural location. Theatrical events in Abergavenny Garden Club, History Group etc in local village hall.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 07:22 AM

Caldicot Castle - events and activities

[REDACTED]

11/18/2025 12:47 AM

Im lost to find out about anything going on

Anonymous

11/18/2025 03:36 PM

Not much

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

Local history societies give great talks - connecting present day to the past

[REDACTED]

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Heritage construction/ reconstruction of long-lost buildings

Anonymous  
11/19/2025 09:33 PM  
The Savoy Theatre in Monmouth has some great things happening.  
Lots of festivals.

Anonymous  
11/21/2025 03:20 PM  
Music, art, craft

Anonymous  
11/21/2025 03:39 PM  
Theatre Dance classes Food Festival

Anonymous  
11/22/2025 11:19 AM  
Borough Theatre, activities at community centre, u3a

Anonymous  
11/23/2025 04:06 AM  
Jazz for young people Dance blast The Gathering All bring culture to  
the marginalised

Anonymous  
11/23/2025 09:07 PM  
Food festival, all the amateur groups and performances in the area,  
Aberlaughs

Anonymous  
11/24/2025 06:21 PM  
A thriving amateur dramatics scene for both adults and children. The  
continuation of attracting professional artists, whether it be bands,  
comedians or theatrical companies.

Anonymous  
11/26/2025 08:28 AM  
Book events are great here. We need much more activity in theatre!  
We need to create more family trails - I have ideas I have tried to  
share

Anonymous  
11/27/2025 11:40 AM  
I help at my local school and go on trips with pupilsto learn about our  
area i am a local councillor and we put on various activities within our  
area I am a member of our local WI which promotes social activities

Anonymous  
11/27/2025 02:42 PM  
The Lantern Parade Monmouth Community Choir RIP Monmouth  
Festival, which was wonderful

Anonymous  
11/27/2025 06:28 PM  
Slow music jam in The Boat Penalt , winter light parade coming up,  
working as part of Wydlwood Arts (-Forest of Dean - but thinking  
about place based arts in the context of the Forest and connecting  
with the places around us such as Monmouthshire and cross border  
contexts). As an artist I also go to Bristol to connect with artist

communities there.

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

The fab Monmouth lantern parade, the wonderful range of offers at our amazing local theatres and the stunning AONB bi-annual river festival

Anonymous

11/29/2025 05:25 PM

NT Live is being introduced to to the Borough Theatre, bringing London productions to the provinces.

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

Volunteering for National trust

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:01 PM

Gwent Music, Operasonic, Chepstow Art Space and The Corn Exchange. Also The Chepstow Community Music centre in Wyedean.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

Good Crafts scene Live music Great Food

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

Usk Show, Usk Christmas Market, Usk Duck Race, Weekend Rumble. I love live music and a day that includes music, theatre, dance, etc would be a great way to bring everyone together. This could be combined with a larger event such as the Usk Show to highlight the rich history of Monmouthshire.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

Karaoke. Association football. Skittles.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

1) Theatre I've been a volunteer at Monmouth's Savoy Theatre for the past 14 years and love spending time there with the team. There's always a great programme of events with stage and film both extremely well represented and with something for everyone. 2) Community I also volunteer at Caerwent Village Hall helping out at Car Boot Sales, Christmas Shopping Night and other events. My husband has compered the Village Show for a number of years and we also run occasional quiz nights at the hall with my husband as quiz setter/quiz master and me as score keeper. 3) Volunteering Less "cultural" perhaps but I also volunteer at TogetherWORKS, Caldicot twice a week (Welsh conversation on Mondays and Knit & Natter on Wednesdays). All the above are important and help keep communities alive.

Anonymous 12/05/2025 07:01 PM	Theatre and comedy shows Museums and exhibitions Monmouth lantern parade
Anonymous 12/06/2025 08:37 AM	Nothing at the moment
Anonymous 12/06/2025 09:38 AM	Performance of 'The Messiah' St Cadoc's in Caerleon, and a Carol Concert in St Woolos Cathedral and the Magor Frost Fayre.
Anonymous 12/06/2025 10:01 AM	Annual Lantern Parade- brings young and old together with crafting ,music and lights to celebrate Christmas in a non religious way.
Anonymous 12/06/2025 06:24 PM	Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra Monmouth Choral Society
Anonymous 12/07/2025 02:33 PM	Plas Gunter Mansion - you should find out more about this £4m heritage and cultural project in development in the heart of Abergavenny - a community led heritage trust and funded with Heritage Fund, Welsh Govt and MCC funds. The themes it explores are closely tied with tolerances and reconciliation and sanctuary - I'm Chair of the Trust ! <a href="https://www.plasguntermansion.org.uk/">https://www.plasguntermansion.org.uk/</a>
Anonymous 12/07/2025 08:30 PM	Dance Blast NT Live at the Borough Bookish talks
Anonymous 12/08/2025 12:25 PM	Theatre ,melville. Abergavenny Quiz, lines taproom ,Usk. Gwent wildlife talks, the grange, Usk.
Anonymous 12/08/2025 02:54 PM	Local archaeology / guided walks in local village (e.g. Caerwent) Singing (choirs).
Anonymous 12/08/2025 03:29 PM	TV/film filming - using our lovely landscape to bring stories to life. Art events - such as Art at Penallt Stories and writing about the area - such as Owen Sheers - inspiring things like to the Abergavenny Writing Festival
Anonymous 12/08/2025 04:11 PM	Teaching botanical painting at usk hub. Taking part there in sewing classes and wreath making. Teaching for kidzart charity in llandogo.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

the river protection ritual activism

Anonymous

12/09/2025 11:28 AM

The Usk Agricultural show The charitable activities of the Llanybi Pumpkin Club The extended bus timetable that allows us greater freedom to travel (even if it still doesn't support an affordable night out)

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

I'm also a textile artist and have opened a quilting studio at Humble By Nature. In addition, I will be opening a retail and workshop space there in the spring. We will be hosting events ranging from beginner classes all the way to workshops by internationally renowned quilt artists as well as launching a membership guild affiliated to the Modern Quilt Guild in the USA.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

Carol playing with the local brass band Arts festival at Caldicot castle Devauden festival

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

Bore coffi at Ty Croeso and it's related welsh speaking activities including a welsh festival in Chepstow. Live music across a range of venues, indoors and outdoors. Craft spaces like Chepstow Art Space where different crafts can be learnt regularly.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

Shire Hall Church Musical shows

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

Girls Guides. Brownies (Scouts and Guides Magor) Knitting and nater (Baptist Chapel Magor)

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:17 AM

Exerciser to keep fit meeting people Keeping Brain active



12/15/2025 11:26 AM

Volunteering

Anonymous

12/15/2025 11:36 AM

Writing group, Art Gallery Visit, Various groups at TogetehrWorks and events at the library

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

Yoga, Craft, Art

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

The chepstow festival of arts, the weekly abergavenny market, the abergavenny food festival.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

None, Not aware of anything exciting happening, lack of accessible info unless it is word of mouth

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Art lessons

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

I don't know as I work in Bristol and am not fully aware.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

none

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

two great theatres/cinemas in town

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

General communication with visitors from elsewhere

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Live shows at Blake Theatre or Savoy and U3A events

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

local panto

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:51 AM

Planning for Christmas

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:57 AM

Abergavenny Film Club Singing in the choir (based in Crickhowell but members from Monmouthshire too) Live events at the Borough Theatre, including live streaming of plays, opera etc from the National Theatre, ROH etc

Anonymous

12/19/2025 01:45 PM

This year I have started going back to theatre and musical event - visited Savoy Theatre for the first time. Newport Transporter bridge restoration - attended a talk, looking forward to visitors centre opening. Always interested in talks on local heritage e.g. Living Levels, discovered country park at Rogiet.

Argaeledd adnoddau, nifer y digwyddiadau

12/19/2025 01:07 PM

**Optional question** (103 response(s), 32 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

### Q10 | So we've asked about strengths, but what do you think could be better?

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:07 AM

There is loads of theatre - but based on views and others people thoughts - we need more scripted contemporary plays for teens

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:46 AM

State of Melville Theatre. Better Leisure centre in Abergavenny. An Arts Centre in Monmouthshire. Proper Art gallery

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:52 AM

Would love to see more music events and the old market hall being turned into a cultural centre with performance space. Rockfield should be more celebrated and local talent eg overmono invited to promote the area/perform. Understand that Monmouth festival was always great too

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:55 AM

Access for younger people into arts careers - where are the jobs? How do they find out? How can they get support to run their own business?

Anonymous

10/31/2025 10:23 AM

Improve road systems to ensure safe travel. Chepstow is described as a "Gateway to Wales" but there is little to make it welcoming to tourists. It has a castle and a river but these 2 potential attractions are not maximised. Road systems in Chepstow are in dire need of improvement. If the old bridge is to remain permanently closed then a new road system has to be created to replace it.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:00 PM

A number of cultural events used to be held at the castle in Chepstow (plays over the summer), and these have virtually disappeared, mainly, as I understand it, due to enormous cost increases to use the performance space in the castle. We do have Castell Roc at that venue, which is a great success and very welcome, but a very different beast from the gentler (and less expensive!) Shakespeare and children's performances of previous years.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:28 PM

More opportunities to be creative at affordable prices and for working people - so in the evenings or weekends.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 01:09 PM

the food festival needs a rethink

Anonymous

10/31/2025 02:38 PM

Community engagement with MCC More notice of events Some were in Raglan for community use. Renovate the existing Old School for community use and community events

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:02 PM

Build community, not just houses. When housing is added, additions to infrastructure, amenities and services must be added. Just adding houses is like doubling your diet but not your clothes.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:58 PM

Anything to engage children and teenagers is always a positive thing. More suitable activities during the holidays especially for teenagers would be good. Events that are affordable for families. Particularly outdoor theatre events. It can be too expensive to justify attending when buying four tickets for some events.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 04:50 PM

Welsh Language provision. classes for everyone in evenings

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:45 PM

Monmouthshire council seems to forget about anything south of Usk

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

Getting to events can be tricky as you get older, especially if you can't drive. No good having a rich but inaccessible venue.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

Funding!! Always a challenge, especially with a cost of living crisis . I'd like to see a 'Battle of the Bands for under 25s and more inter-generational cultural activities. I think we are fortunate in that our council is generally more open to supporting culture in general than some other places (and of course we are generally a more affluent county). But those in more deprived areas - and in rural areas - do get left behind. Transport is a vital part of the picture! We desperately need more Exhibition space in the county, and staff to organise and promote Exhibitions - more support for artists to get paid is crucial too!

Anonymous

The Borough theatre seems to run nothing but tribute acts - I am sure

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11/01/2025 09:01 AM

they bring in money, but it's not very varied. The cinema has a very mainstream offering and doesn't fill up, and yet there is clearly a demand for more interesting films as the film society continues and other venues show films.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:09 AM

Childrens activities

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

Communication between volunteer groups to share ideas and build a network

Anonymous

11/01/2025 10:49 AM

Unless you live in 1of the 4 big towns you are not informed or ignored. No news letters, leaflets or local magazines are sent to villages. Almost as if Council and towns don't want to bother with smaller places. Have a central website that tell you what groups & societies are available.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

Build a bridge across the Raglan Castle to rejoin the village with its Castle. Making a safe walking route.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:24 PM

Support for local artists and makers: Sustained funding, shared workspaces, and more visibility for local talent would help nurture the creative economy and keep skills alive. Youth engagement: Expanding creative programmes for young people could encourage new generations to get involved and stay connected to their communities. Green and cultural integration: While Monmouthshire's landscape is a huge asset, more could be done to connect nature and culture — using green spaces for outdoor art, performances, and community projects.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:58 PM

More varied theatre at the Borough Abergavenny including plays by great dramatists. Transport links into rural valleys.



11/01/2025 01:29 PM

Co-ordination of information about events and the provision of venues - fewer and fewer as the years go by

Anonymous

11/01/2025 01:44 PM

A better form of communication about upcoming events. A hub for information, an online one-stop-shop we can use to plan visits. Integrating storytelling, drama, dance and music to our historic sites and including local schools in creating exhibitions and or plays/concerts.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 03:25 PM

I would like to see screenings of Opera and Ballet.

  
11/01/2025 07:45 PM

We need more support at the county level for town and village enterprises. We need more joined-up communication between the Monmouthshire towns and villages - increased collaboration between the various groups in those towns. We need to do more to integrate the schools into our cultural activities.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 07:51 PM

Attract more young people

Anonymous

11/01/2025 11:54 PM

It could be better if we did not have to ignore our neighbouring communities across the imaginary border imposed by government. We are unique and not driven by ideals and culture remote from us.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Younger entertainment i.e. popular/rock music.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 05:08 PM

Focus on reversing the decline within town and village centres, creating centres for arts, walking and independent businesses.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 07:33 AM

More widespread

Anonymous

11/03/2025 10:06 AM

More evening as I work in week and weekends

Anonymous

11/03/2025 02:59 PM

There is a lack of funding and opportunity for independent theatre. The larger theatres are reliant on tribute bands and amateur musicals to remain financially viable. This means that 'straight' plays and other forms of drama are neglected. The cost of hiring a 200+ theatre is prohibitive if you know that you can only fill 50% capacity. However, 50% is still 100+ people who want to see a different type of entertainment. Ideally, there would be a studio space where new writing and smaller-scale productions could be performed. The Melville Theatre could provide this but needs investment to improve its lighting, sound and seating. Another major problem is the lack of affordable rehearsal space.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 06:45 PM

Provide funding for twinning activities and events, facilitating cultural exchanges

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

Create new venues, even if they are temporary - vacant shops, disused warehouse spaces, out-of-season parkland etc. Find someone with the vision and enthusiasm to help drive a completely new, vibrant energy. Stop relying on the kitsch, the twee, the utterly boring restatements of the past. Embrace new work, everywhere. Take risks!!!

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:26 PM

1. Making it easier for local voluntary groups to publicise events around the county.

Anonymous

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

Publicity

Anonymous

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

the absence of a 'proper gallery space' in Monmouth - artist studios to rent - planning for live work spaces a serious attempt to promote creative industries through a broader and more challenging 'curriculum' - competitions and masterclasses, hosting major exhibitions everything feels a bit 'safe' and homogenous

Anonymous

11/08/2025 06:02 PM

Better support for Gwent Music - to nurture the next generation. 15 years ago Gwent Music was one of the outstanding music services in the UK, and all of our children benefited hugely from it (one is now a professional musician). It is still doing its very best, but is in a constant battle for resources.

Anonymous

11/10/2025 03:51 PM

Access for people with disability

Anonymous

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

More resources to enable action and promotion of same stories. Library of what promotion materials are already available and potential programmes of works, such as those developed for Offa's Dyke.

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

It's very disappointing that the cultural strategy was written using ChatGPT, when Monmouthshire is home to many highly engaged and literate human beings. It suggests that the council actually doesn't want to engage in culture. Also, there could be a better central website with a more useful and thorough database of upcoming

events. Monmouthshire could also be better at communicating its unique cultural heritage to foster a sense of pride in the town.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

All areas in Monmouth are completely separate . As in there is no connection. This is a holiday area and is advertised in the media worldwide .Because everyone expects people to view there phones most events go unnoticed and there is a poor turnout. You need a Monmouthshire noticeboard for each are that we can all contribute to , not just the Council. You make every thing complicated .It is hard to fill in messages / give ideas / phone a person .

Anonymous

11/14/2025 07:16 PM

Keep the Baker st cinema going A youth theatre

Anonymous

11/15/2025 09:12 AM

More diversity at aber theatres, comedy spots, original music, variety of music, affordable art classes, evening events fir people working

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

Supporting arts organisations such as Mid Wales Opera that are struggling financially but are of the highest standard.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 07:22 AM

Greater range of activities at Caldicot Castle, making it a 'destination' location where there are improved cafe facilities and more of a space to sit, learn, etc.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 08:09 PM

More range of acts at the Borough theatre. Very poor at the moment, with just third rate acts. No variety.

  
11/18/2025 12:47 AM

Abergavenny could do with a venue for bands to play and diverse live music. Local boys Alabama 3 played Chepstow castle it would be great to see them in Abergavenny. I would also like to learn French if this is considered cultural.

Anonymous

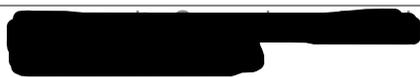
11/18/2025 03:36 PM

More high quality art exhibitions & temporary history exhibitions. Some empty shops in high streets could have displays in windows.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

You don't mention the importance of the Gwent levels! Prehistory, Roman, medieval and modern inhabitants and the unique levels habitat



Ban on demolition of Old Builds constructed prior to 1950s.

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Anonymous

11/19/2025 09:33 PM

More support for music. This support should start in school to enable the musical heritage to continue.

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:20 PM

Many small communities in Monmouthshire means limited offering

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:39 PM

Better facilities in local theatres Wider range of activities available like opera Better parking options like family parking spaces in car parks and more opportunities for free parking

Anonymous

11/22/2025 11:19 AM

Ensure future of theatre and cinemas through grants

Anonymous

11/23/2025 04:06 AM

More access for all so it's not a middle class activity

Anonymous

11/23/2025 09:07 PM

The quality of the Borough theatre facilities and the accessibility of it for local groups. The cost and uncooperative approach of the theatre make it almost unusable for amateur groups

Anonymous

11/24/2025 06:21 PM

Infrastructure and facilities. The Borough theatre, Abergavenny, for example. Probably the jewel in Monmouthshire,s cultural crown. Despite the best efforts of the current management team, the facilities for those hiring it are becoming worse. Leaky rooves, decrepit dressing rooms, defective lifts and alarm systems.. Front of house is shiny and new but back stage a completely different story. This along with hugely increased fees for renting it and additional fees for all the extras which used to be included or FOC are making it very nearly impossible for local societies to carry on using it. A long way away from when the Beatles performed there.

Anonymous

11/26/2025 08:28 AM

Funding and support for new writers and new work Theatres such as The Bourough Theatre should be more welcoming and support new work.

Anonymous

11/27/2025 11:40 AM

Promotion needs to b e more proactive

Anonymous

11/27/2025 02:42 PM

\* Network, resources, training for creatives (and/or signposting of ); including professional skills to grow the sector and advocate for it (business, marketing/comms, fundraising, evaluation, advocacy) \* A professional development pipeline for creatives wanting to use their skills in education, wellbeing, social impact (ie community/socially engaged arts) \* Activities that link culture with education, wellbeing, social impact - professional community arts & arts education shaped by communities \* Platforms for emerging performing artists - particularly music

Anonymous

11/27/2025 06:28 PM

I live in Redbrook and it has always been difficult to get arts funding and support to make art in the place that I live and the cross border communities that j am part of. I would like to see empty spaces being taken over by artist groups and more artist led activity supported in the area.

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

Better public transport offers, advertised and improved during large events to help prevent the negative effects of potential increase in traffic on our narrow roads and in our compact towns. Traffic enforcement so those trying to attend events are not juggling poorly parked cars whilst trying to enjoy our wonderful local towns. Encourage and assist more events in town centres to draw the public into our high streets. When redesigning high street improvements, ensuring the spaces are versatile and able to accommodate town centre events well (e.g enabling pop up stalls and pop up bollards that would easily temporarily create living pedestrianised streets)

Anonymous

11/29/2025 05:25 PM

Perhaps better linkage with some of the voluntary groups eg the Women's Network which reaches hundreds of women in the local area and is good at publicising events

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

If not on social media it is hard to find out what is going on. For great culture we tend to head out of local area - bring it to our high streets - all those empty shops could be filled with inspiring things. Help towns thrive by reducing rents for shops and in turn keep people local - then cultural venues in towns will also thrive.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:01 PM

Music education in schools. Covid and years of funding cuts has decimated Music provision in schools. It's a disgrace. And so short sighted too - all the health and wellbeing benefits that children could have had, especially after covid.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

Better visibility if what's on Easier to get round - transport can be a barrier

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

Lots of the main events are organised by community groups, not the local authority. There is room for the LA to encourage more collaboration from across Monmouthshire on an annual events, maybe involving the schools, community centres, etc

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

A bypass around Chepstow enabling through traffic to pass will greatly enhance the area as a destination. A destination for local people to assemble and enjoy all that Chepstow can offer. A premier racecourse which could also be a venue for many more diverse cultural activities. Chepstow Castle is an unaffordable attraction for the vast majority of local people. Much more use could be made of our castle as an attraction. Not necessarily just for concerts and shows but for the general interest of the community. The castle should be freely accessible and not just for school trips and CADW members.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

More free parking options in Monmouth itself. When volunteering at the Savoy I tend to try to find on-street parking although the free parking in car parks in Monmouth in December is most welcome as I'm usually on duty for a good number of December dates!

Anonymous

12/05/2025 07:01 PM

No major art gallery Seen as Indian towns and not a county

Anonymous

12/06/2025 08:37 AM

Please see number 8. Also invest in libraries, offer more books, make the village centre a nice place to be, deal with anti social behaviours from council houses.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 09:38 AM

Venues are scattered across the County, it is frequently a challenge to get to these places by public transport - especially at the end of a performance - or to find sufficient car parking space. Some support in providing transport to remote areas would help.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 10:01 AM

There is funding available for the Arts from the Welsh Government which is "shared" proportioned to the city and rural areas across the country but it does not reach the actual artists living in monmouthshire. It's given to artists in Cardiff who have inflicted an annual celebration of the river Wye upon us. Rather than allowing local people to organise their own celebrations using locals..artists

actors etc come out from the city to "entertain" in this weird River Festival its not a local tradition and I don't think many locals see any of the funding. Its an almost artificial and superficial celebration led by the city artists using grants that are supposed to be for rural people. I believe local children should be funded with musical instruments in school and excellent music teachers but sadly this is not the case. in addition local bands Monmouth Brass could be funded its a crying shame that Monmouth Carnival is led by children from Bristol playing and celebrating with African culture style Drums. It's great to hear and welcome diversity but in doing so are we letting our own children in Monmouthshire down by not providing them with an outlet to express our culture ? Where is country dancing in the schools? Fifty years ago I was taught dances and we preformed them in the streets of Monmouthshire as a child on St Davids day everyone enjoyed the gift of learning to express themselves in dance to music . Ensure that grants and funding reaches the local people and local talent is actually supported.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 06:24 PM

Provision of musical education for children

Anonymous

12/07/2025 02:33 PM

Wew have worked well with other agencies and the Council but I can see how collaboration across culture and heritage can be strengthened. Our Trust has been hugely successful and we have lots of experience to share

Anonymous

12/07/2025 08:30 PM

Provide a place where young people/bands can perform music.  
Support Dance Blast in finding a new venue to expand its circus arm.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 12:25 PM

More

Anonymous

12/08/2025 02:54 PM

Sad to see an important historical venue closing - the Tabernacle on the A48 which was the first non-conformist church in Wales. It may not be viable as a house of worship now, but it is a beautiful small venue that could be given new lease of life for events / exhibitions / community functions.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 03:29 PM

Have more professional art connections - for instance, Llantarnam Grange is seen as an Art Centre for SE Wales - but it is not included in the draft doc and is not invited into the area. Filming takes place - but we don't optimise the profile it gives. In town interpretation - bring the individual stories of the area to life in the streets through

interpretation, artworks, ambassadors, etc Our culture is continually changing as new people join our population - yes, there are the pride events, but how do we include the culture of new members of our community Our industrial stories are often overlooked. Physical and intellectual access is not always good or clear

Anonymous

12/08/2025 04:11 PM

More advertising on paper,as an oldie, I don't scan my phone all day, I look at newspapers and posters in windows. If you don't know what to look for, you don't know what's happening. Use the Abergavenny chronicle or Monmouthshire beacon.....

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

fund the arts and artists. have a council funded post that assists artists in accessing what funding there is in a professional way, and helps alert and guide them to possibilities when they appear.

Anonymous

12/09/2025 11:28 AM

Usk is looking very sad at the moment and business is under pressure to just survive let alone support cultural activities. Usk needs to be better presented. Taxation policies (local with Council tax and business rates and national with employment taxation and agricultural IHT) are going mad and everyone will be tightening their belts. I offer that farming will be in a much worse place in ten year's time. Other than for those directly involved with matters associated with crafts, i.e. those that are struggling to make a living, I doubt there are many locally where cultural issues are high on their day-to-day agenda.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

Spaces fit for purpose. Affordable art studios and workshop spaces for artists. A funded music festival

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

Better advertising from banners, social media, radio and local newspapers. More youth involvement from schools, kids clubs, societies etc Engage with local clubs/groups that are fill with talented musicians, singers, artists etc

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

Better mapping and sharing of what is available right across Monmouthshire. Its hard to know where to find information other than town council websites and Facebook.



12/15/2025 11:26 AM

More service users

Anonymous

More evening events

12/15/2025 11:36 AM

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

Information on events and caldicot castle (and in the village) on notice boards NOT on webpages, lot's of folks don't do computers

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Tech motivation

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Embracing our Welsh heritage and identity. We must remember that we are decended from the Trojans

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

More celebrations at seasonal times of the year

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

More for families

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

historical tours

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:51 AM

More buses.

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:57 AM

I would like the library to be open for longer - only 4.5 days - closed for lunch for an hour, early closing on Friday.

Anonymous

12/19/2025 01:45 PM

More work on raising awareness of caring for our countryside and heritage? More volunteering opportunities (I will be retiring soon!) \*  
More tourist centres like Chepstow.

**Optional question** (98 response(s), 37 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

## Q11 | How does culture impact you or affect your life?

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:07 AM

I am an actor - director

Anonymous

It can relieve stress and improve people's lives.

10/31/2025 09:46 AM

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:52 AM

Proud to be Welsh and our heritage of fighting for people's rights and protecting the underdog

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:55 AM

Helping my daughter get a career - she has autism - so it occupies alot of my time

Anonymous

10/31/2025 10:23 AM

If it is accessible it improves a feeling of belonging

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:00 PM

It is a great joy to me and drives much of my social interaction

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:28 PM

It makes me feel good - it makes me think deeper and it can just be escapism. It makes me hopeful for the future

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:02 PM

Just in everyday life. Being able to talk with people who have the same outlook on life. Events which I like and where I can feel relaxed and at home.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:58 PM

It connects me to the past and present (forming my identity) and helps to create a united community with shared values which makes Monmouthshire a great place to live.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

I am involved in art both running practical art groups and an art society which encourages members to visit galleries stately homes and gardens in addition to providing lectures. This keeps me and participants busy. Cultural activities allow one to interact with those with similar interests and sparks ideas and enjoyment.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

It results in improved community connection and therefore personal wellbeing. We need space to discuss/express and explore ideas through the arts and I feel Abergavenny buzzes with these activities, though I personally don't have any creative hobbies. I love attending the concerts and performances here (and there are many) but I must budget carefully to attend only the priority ones for me.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:01 AM

I like to go to music gigs, stand up comedy, but usually end up going to Cardiff as there is not much locally.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:09 AM

Well being Health

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

Keeps me active physically and mentally. Keeps me connected with our local community and it's residents.contributes to the general well being.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 10:49 AM

Theatre visits, historical sites visits and enjoying nature. Sport.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

I like visiting museums, Castles other towns in Wales.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:24 PM

Sense of wellbeing - makes Abergavenny an attractive place to visit and supports the economy.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:58 PM

Very important for my happiness and social contact.

[REDACTED]

11/01/2025 01:29 PM

Very directly as performers, musical directors and choral festival organisers

Anonymous

11/01/2025 01:44 PM

It offers a bit of peace from the relentless day to day and whether you are exploring a ruin, listening to music or trying new food at the night market, it gives you a sense of belonging and a place in the world.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 03:25 PM

Culture is part of my whole life. I enjoy developing an understanding of our local history as part of Welsh history as a whole. , Art history is a particular interest as well as concerts in the borough theatre and those performed by Gwent Bach. I belong to Isca Probus and The History Society. A recent development has been the film nights and talks organised by Bookish

[REDACTED]

11/01/2025 07:45 PM

I work for a Monmouth institution - the Haberdashers' School, and live in the county's countryside. I am a historian, and part of the Monmouth History and Field Society, and have a love for the history of the region. I am part of the committee organizing the annual medieval festival in Monmouth, and am also connected through family to the running of the annual Monmouth Show. I try and partake of the opportunities for cultural engagement and enrichment within the

county when I can, and when I am aware of them.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 07:51 PM

It enables me to meet more people and to understand the importance of new and traditional culture is in Monmouthshire

Anonymous

11/01/2025 11:54 PM

Makes me really sad that we are lumped in with people and communities with dissimilar history and heritage.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Makes me happy.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 05:08 PM

It's the difference between towns and centres in South Monmouthshire acting as true communities rather than just dormitories for urban economies to east and west.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 07:33 AM

No at all

Anonymous

11/03/2025 10:06 AM

Enhance my life and gives me a positive attitude and outlook.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 02:59 PM

I am the Artistic Director of Happy Dragons Theatre CIC. Our mission it to create performances for, with and about the people of Wales. On a daily basis I am liaising with performers, venues and other creative artists. Monmouthshire has a vibrant artistic community but everyone is struggling to fund their work.

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

I'm a professional artist and educator specialising in installation and sculpture with a national and international cv.

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:26 PM

1. I am heavily involved in a range of activities. They give me a sense of purpose and well being.

Anonymous

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

?

Anonymous

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

all day every day - the question is a little daft. Culture is the sea we swim in

Anonymous

11/08/2025 06:02 PM

My lifeblood.

Anonymous

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

It roots us in our past, but enables us to have vision for the future.

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

Culture impacts all human beings and affects all our lives profoundly in every possible way.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

Culture has always been good for me . I have had a lot happening with family for the last 20 years . Being able to walk in a park or pop to Tintern Station Cafe . Visit some of our free attractions is brilliant and has helped me stay sane . Overall good for mental health . I must mention the improvement in the cycle paths has helped . But as an OAP the condition of Monnow Street surface is very danerous .

Anonymous

11/14/2025 07:16 PM

Gives me insight into other people's lives I love being absorbed by learning something new Live music brings joy

Anonymous

11/15/2025 09:12 AM

Would like to he more involved but time is a factor, therefore has to be really worthwhile and affordable

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

Theatre has always been a big part of my life. Craft activities, local get-togethers, talks, arts education take up most of my time. Aesthetics are very important to me. I think we all require beauty in life.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 08:09 PM

Enhances it.

  
11/18/2025 12:47 AM

It enhances my life when I can find things to do . makes me feel invigorated and inspired. I live on my own so anything that gets me out of the house is great I often find out after the event whats been rather than is going on. A website listing events daily in Abergavenny or monmouthshire would be good.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 03:36 PM

It's amazing going to see art, sculpture, paintings in museums & art galleries. Also getting a sense of place & history in castles and historic houses.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

Make me feel connected to Wales and its people

[REDACTED]

much

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Anonymous

11/19/2025 09:33 PM

Extremely positive on my wellbeing.

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:20 PM

I'd like to be able to afford more events (music and dance especially) as it provided à sense of well-being and joy

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:39 PM

Pastimes, making friends, contributing to local economy, building community

Anonymous

11/22/2025 11:19 AM

Gets us off the sofa and away from the television and out into our community

Anonymous

11/23/2025 04:06 AM

It makes life more colourful

Anonymous

11/24/2025 06:21 PM

Hugely important. Gives a sense of civic togetherness, helps my mental health to have such a fulfilling hobby.

Anonymous

11/26/2025 08:28 AM

It helps my mental health to put on shows and events. The problem is that there is not much support and never a way to build these skills into a career. It's always done with struggle of little money.

Anonymous

11/27/2025 11:40 AM

it is my area of which I am proud

Anonymous

11/27/2025 02:42 PM

Music and the arts specifically, are central to my life - they have shaped me and continue to do so, and give my life meaning and purpose. This is a poem I wrote ten years ago and this is the best way I can sum it up: Arts and culture are worth it because ... With them, we are more. More human More empathic More inspired More inventive More resourceful More fulfilled More creative More visionary More future-proof More socially aware More globally aware More economically viable With them we are more of a society.

Anonymous

11/27/2025 06:28 PM

It's part of nearly everything I do and enjoy

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

Culture as I see it shapes my beliefs, my values, and my social connections. My Welsh identity forms a major role in how I see myself and how I express myself.

Anonymous

11/29/2025 05:25 PM

sense of belonging, sense of responsibility, sense of appreciating the culture of Wales and the Welsh language

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

It is a huge part of my life - both my work and my leisure time. I consume lots but filling in this has made me realise that I don't do much locally. I tend to go to London or Cardiff.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:01 PM

What is life without music or art? I am a designer and have worked for nearly 30 years as a designer. Do the arts are very important and sadly always undervalued.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

It improves it

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

A sense of pride in my area, keeping my mind and body active and bringing joy! I also love to support local businesses whenever possible

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

Imported or imposed cultural activities do nothing for me except to remind me that local culture is considered irrelevant. Culture is what we are and how we live with each other.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

It's very much a part of my life. I have a great love of theatre and cinema. I'm an avid reader and am happy to recommend book shops in Monmouth and Chepstow (not forgetting the charity shops!) I started volunteering at the Savoy Theatre, Monmouth when I retired from "the day job" and it has given me so much joy over the years.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 07:01 PM

It is how I relax, how I socialise, how I like to spend my free time

Anonymous

12/06/2025 08:37 AM

I choose to live in Monmouthshire because of how it used to be. Now you're turning it into something it doesn't want to be. Stop your housing development plans in portskewett and Broomes. Stop the traveller site. Just please stop. The traffic is already awful and you're making it worse.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 09:38 AM

Without singing or listening to music performances my life would be poorer and I would not feel valued.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 10:01 AM

What is life without music dance and art? Culture is central to my life

Anonymous

12/06/2025 06:24 PM

Music is very important to me and actively participating provides friendships, mental (and physical) activity and entertainment/education for residents of the county.

Anonymous

12/07/2025 02:33 PM

Ingrained

Anonymous

12/07/2025 08:30 PM

It is nourishing for the soul

Anonymous

12/08/2025 12:25 PM

Love it

Anonymous

12/08/2025 02:54 PM

I sing every week in choir (in Newport) and at other venues wherever I can. I like to learn about local (ancient) history.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 03:29 PM

As a professional artist and heritage interpreter, it is part of all aspects of my life

Anonymous

12/08/2025 04:11 PM

I like a good concert but there don't seem to be many. I read lots of historical books about artists and their lives. I will travel to London for botanical exhibitions.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

it is life.. the rest is just survival!

Anonymous

12/09/2025 11:28 AM

Other than the events mentioned earlier, hardly at all in terms of attending Monmouthshire events. We are more likely to be found in

Swansea enjoying something at Swansea Arena or in Cardiff attending one of its venues. The one impact aligning with Monmouthshire is public transport. It has improved recently but it is still not possible to attend events outside of the area and return late in the night. Attending cultural events its therefore a very expensive activity that more often than not involves overnight hotel stays.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

See above

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

Art is a big part of my life from my hobbies of playing in a brass band entertaining the local community at park events/festivals/shows etc But also art is a big part of my life in work, working as a mural artist, window artist and face painter for the last 12 years. My house is enriched with my children playing piano and other musical instruments, being creative with art. My husband is an oil painter artist trained in traditional arts. Our house is fill of art and creative activities.

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

Its what makes us human.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 09:16 AM

Interesting, reason to go out and learn about local area

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

me do stuff

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:17 AM

Gives me an interest

  
12/15/2025 11:26 AM

Pop Culture - i.e Filming provide me with distractions, volunteering gets me out of the house and prevents isolation and depression.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 11:36 AM

Companionship

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

Confidence, strength, Positive thinking

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

The strong culture gives connection in shared interests and enjoyment

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

Mental well being, mixing with other people, learning new things

Anonymous

12/16/2025 11:34 AM

Enjoyable when attend activities are generally not local and need transport at night time buses are not good

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Improve your knowledge and understanding of other countrys

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Like it

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

I love visual arts and film/theatre etc. My favourite actor is Welsh ledgend Richard Burton.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Welsh culture important to me

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

i read a lot and have been on local stage

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

It is important to embrace all our differences as it is enlightening and hearing and sharing music, poetry etc... from other cultures.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

It gives me pleasure and is good for well-being

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

I have a strong interest in history and enjoy learning about any local areas

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:57 AM

It brightens up the long winter months, November to March (when the clocks go back to Winter time)

Anonymous

12/19/2025 01:45 PM

I enjoy trying out/ learning about new things/ experiences. An opportunity to organise a day out/ event with friends.

**Optional question** (98 response(s), 37 skipped)

Question type: Essay Question

**Q12** | After reading the draft strategy, is there anything else you would like to see reflected in it?

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:07 AM

More input on the use of the theatre at cheaper cost for locals.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:52 AM

More concrete dynamic actions

Anonymous

10/31/2025 09:55 AM

As per my thoughts I. Qn10. Also we need a central website with everything on - it's hard to find on the internet - if you don't know its name you can't find out about it.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:00 PM

Street festivals are a great way of brining people to an area, and bringing residents together. They have been very successful, but often struggle to happen at all due to the pressures they put on the volunteers who organise them. For instance, I understand from the organisers that the hugely popular Chepstow Festival of Arts will not be taking place next year (or possibly ever again) due to the few organisers finding it difficult to shoulder the burden of all the work involved. I would like the strategy to cover ways of encouraging and supporting volunteers in a practical way that could help even small groups organise significant events without having to make huge personal sacrifices - for instance, by providing office or technical support.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:28 PM

It felt a bit dry. But I am so glad you have included the idea to expand educational course offers. I would love to be able to learn Welsh in person in Monmouth and I love attending art/craft courses. Please have at least some these in the evenings and weekends. And I like the idea of a events calendar.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 02:38 PM

The draft document could have a note of memorandum or a glossy. Who are the partners refried to in the document it may have been good if there had been named .....MCC and partners. It would be difficult to review the opportunities in the community and the current creative community when MCC are cutting funding and closing or not maintaining the current buildings

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:02 PM

As above, build community, not just houses. Also build at a rate where people can be integrated into the community. If you build too fast, you create opposition and us-and-them cultural clashes.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

Culture needs to be accessible and during the past couple of decades we seem to have gone backwards in providing free culture for all. The. I toria. Philanthropists were aware that everyone needed access to art galleries, museums and libraries for free education. Now we have museums, great educational and cultural tools, which don't have curators, no public art galleries in Monmouthshire and libraries without qualified librarians. Old hat you might say, we are in the digital age. I take my grandchildren to museums and art galleries and they interact with what they see. When they come to visit they regard Wales as the land of castles, history waiting to be explored and the Shire Hall gets a big thumbs up too. If we are looking for art galleries though, it becomes a little trickier.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

I'm delighted to see the Action Plan including the Forum and a Cultural Alliance. Pleased also to see GAVO as a participant! (I work for GAVO, in community development and support many third sector organisations). I fully support Active Travel, but we also need to be realistic that dark evenings for older people with mobility issues means some form.of community transport/bus/car transport is required. Transport is a barrier to involvement in the arts for rural communities - I'd love to see the transport element covered in every bid and project plan, as it was with Abergavenny Pride. The Draft Strategy looks exciting and I like the emphasis on inclusion, but this could be even greater so that young people as well as those traditionally excluded from cultural activities can be supported to thrive.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:01 AM

I'd like to see more emphasis on young people - opportunities for young people to participate in cultural events, learn skills, train for careers in the arts etc. There is not much for young people in Abergavenny.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

Events that are intergenerational, like the Food Festival,Writing festival etc are good for the community.Summer/Winter fairs support local businesses which help the community thrive

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

Depends what you are going to spend my council tax on and if the Council can afford it without diminishing its main services such as education, social care, highways, rubbish collection.

[REDACTED]  
11/01/2025 12:59 PM

A definition of what you mean by the term culture.

Anonymous  
11/01/2025 01:44 PM

No

Anonymous  
11/01/2025 03:25 PM

I feel that Monmouthshire does quite a good job of promoting cultural events .

[REDACTED]  
11/01/2025 07:45 PM

I would have liked to see more about maximising the opportunities for combining education and cultural enrichment, both in formal education (schools and colleges) but also in community education and organisations, such as history societies, U3A, and the like.

Anonymous  
11/01/2025 07:51 PM

Welsh Traditional Music and Morris Dancing. Please please acknowledge the extensive network of bell ringers in the county and how they cooperate and collaborate with each other. If you want to know more about these then please contact any of the following Welsh Traditional Music - CLERA Morris Dancing - Isca Morris Bellringing [www.llanmon.org.uk](http://www.llanmon.org.uk) Also Please please please do not ignore the marvellous cultural impact of the Gwent Federation of Women's Institutes

Anonymous  
11/01/2025 11:54 PM

The identity of Chepstow as an unique community within Monmouthshire and our greater area.

Anonymous  
11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Festivals are great in the summer but indoor evrnt in cold wet months.

Anonymous  
11/02/2025 05:08 PM

Greater recognition of threats and opportunities from large population and cultural centres both in Cardiff/Newport and Bristol conurbations.

Anonymous  
11/03/2025 07:33 AM

To become more wide reaching

Anonymous  
11/03/2025 02:59 PM

The strategy is good and very welcome. However, there needs to be a clear message that funding will be available for each initiative and how it will be allocated. Please liaise with stakeholders when determining how any grant-giving process will be conducted. There

may be a tendency to underestimate the number of theatre creators in Monmouthshire. Noticeably, question 6 of this survey didn't list 'director', or 'writer'. If you are creating a Monmouthshire Culture Strategy, consider also developing a festival that celebrates the arts in the area. There is currently a writing festival in Abergavenny, and people are willing to set up an Arts Festival (to include theatre). A Monmouthshire Arts Festival would encourage tourism and boost the local economy. Consider working alongside wildlife and eco charities to create artistic collaborations taking place in the natural environment of Monmouthshire.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 06:45 PM

More emphasis on twinning and cultural exchanges

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

see 10 above

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:26 PM

The cultural offer can be put into two different categories. On the one had there are the "big"/professional attractions (e.g. castles) that attract visitors into the county. The business case is important here. On the other had there are the "small"/amateur attractions where the key aims are community cohesion, promotion of sense of place and development of skills etc. This is implied in the strategy but needs to be more clearly distinguished and support tailored in different ways.

Anonymous

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

?

Anonymous

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

the draft strategy lacks ambition and imagination - it does not show the levels of investment or lack thereof - the priorities for the next 3 years etc. It does not segment either audiences or artists (in the broad sense of the word). for example art gives no examples of the amazing individual artists in our midst. whilst I understand the need for a glossy approach I would have preferred a more creative and engaging strategy - at a minimum the artists included should have been credited there should be ideas for residencies, bursaries, tool and resource banks, workshops and courses

Anonymous

11/08/2025 06:02 PM

A bigger emphasis on children and young people.

Anonymous

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 contains some actions to include and there are projects we are already working on .

Need to minimise impact on use of sensitive and protected sites, including scheduled ancient monuments Be aware of staff resourcing and ability to do more - partnership work with others essential for delivery investigate opportunities to engage with and enable young people to help forum/library/training/updated information for ambassadors

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

A focus on celebrating and investing in human cultural activity as opposed to lazy use of ChatGPT, because being human is the entire point of culture.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

Its seems to tell you everthing you need to know . But you have to be connected to know about it .I was sent information about this servey from the Local History Group . If I wasnt a member I wouldnt know about it . Even though I have lived in the same area of Monmouth for over 70 years.

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

It all looks very worthy but there is little mention of how it's going to be funded

Anonymous

11/17/2025 08:09 PM

The strategy was just a collection of management-speak verbiage. Cut it in half and just produce a sequence of measurable commitments.

  
11/18/2025 12:47 AM

I know there is Abergavenny focus, but I would like to see more things to do in it and more social events like fashion shows. A board games night. more things where people can interact and get to know each other. It would be good to have a specific events based paper. Since the Hill closed I have found it difficult to find evening classes that would be good if there was an adult learning centre. I would like to see more plays and theatre at affordable prices. A website listing events would be good in fact invaluable to me.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 03:36 PM

More focus on visual arts.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

Greater focus on Welsh language and unique history

  
Please see my PDF Umbrella Representation which has many overlapping themes.

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Anonymous

More funding for music.

11/19/2025 09:33 PM

Anonymous

Better parking opportunities during large events like the food festival, more emphasis on improving the events and culture already in the area rather than opening more events

11/21/2025 03:39 PM

Anonymous

More accessibility for the marginalised

11/23/2025 04:06 AM

Anonymous

I would like to see more mention of your venues and how you will be supporting them and securing their future.

11/24/2025 06:21 PM

Anonymous

Allow creatives in Wales to write and put things on that are not necessarily set in Wales. It stops creatives being free to showcase a wide choice of storytelling.

11/26/2025 08:28 AM

Anonymous

As a start it is very good

11/27/2025 11:40 AM

Anonymous

Well done to all involved, this is a great piece of work and captures Monmouthshire, as much as anyone ever could! Here are the notes I wrote (fast!) as I was reading it, in case they are of any help: P8 diagram - some are societal/individual benefits / outcomes (wellbeing, health, improved economy) some are what these result in/contribute to - tourism, cultural activities, creative capacity. Could the distinction be made perhaps in colour or design. So that Creative capacity - > cultural activities leads to health, wellbeing, improved economy improved tourism? P11 - active travel routes - link to culture needs to be clearer? The 'What's happening' sections are currently: Festivals & shows | Art | Community P14 - art could be misinterpreted. Perhaps call it Visual and performing arts? P14 - choirs? I may have missed it, but there are many community/voluntary arts groups, particularly choirs - could these be included? eg Monmouth Community Choir, Monmouth Choral Society, Kingfisher Choir. Perhaps on page 14. There's some repetition between the main copy eg what's happening in our communities, and the 'what's happening' boxouts. Could the word count be reduced by rationalising these? eg Agricultural shows para on p15 could be removed, there will be other examples too Overall it feels difficult to 'grasp' the breadth of what's happening as it's all described in prose. Would it be helpful to have a page which lists the type of activities

11/27/2025 02:42 PM

and groups. A comprehensive list of the categories of activities. Then it would also be easier to see what's missing. Eg professional participatory arts run by professional community/socially engaged artists and shaped by the community, has always been a gap in Monmouthshire with a few notable exceptions. P22/22 - table - very pleased to see this so clearly laid out, feels very hopeful. It seems more like an internal document, but I guess this is? If you do a shorter/public facing version, could it be written in a way that demonstrates what it will mean for people? Action plan generally - how will individuals, communities, continue to shape all aspects? Probably not a question for this stage, but it would be great for MCC to be leading the way in co-production, co-creation, co-commissioning Generally, perhaps I missed it, I wanted to see the strategy enabling/catalysing/having as a goal, stronger links between wider policy/sector areas - health, ec dev, social care, civic life/citizenship/community cohesion. These are mentioned throughout ,but I wonder if it should be outlined as a specific strategic goal? To embed culture as contributing to wider policy outcomes, to being essential for individual and community thriving? May help for advocacy to mention the Wellbeing of future generations and specifically reflect their wording of the 7 goals? GENERALLY:I love the style and the way culture is described, but in the arts/culture we often fall into the trap of writing for ourselves, in a way we're used to describing arts/culture, which can alienate people. To engage the wider public, could a version be created that is shorter, less wordy, scannable, more conversational, direct and easier to digest? Written for the general reader, including questions/prompts to them, in order to engage them? So they see themselves and their friends and family in this? Also, some of this appears to have been written with ChatGPT (as a writer I can recognise the style!) which is fine, but I think over time other people will increasingly recognise the style. To future proof it, it would be good to perhaps edit to strip out some of those aspects.

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

a stronger Welsh identity for the future of Monmouthshire

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

More work with local schools or colleges for apprenticeship in the sector. More about volunteering opportunities for all ages Link sport with culture more - they seem very separate communities but should be linked more eg Santa fun run. Include something about supporting Monmouth specifically to recover from flooding This is mostly a report about what is happening now not about a clear vision for the future. A community consultation is great but republish this afterwards to show the impact and a clear vision.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:01 PM

You need to invest in music education for children if you don't want to lose music in Monmouthshire. Chepstow School is a good example of a school whose headteachers have not valued music education.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

Welsh language

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

No, I'm glad you have a plan

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

Monmouthshire generated authentic culture of the local people and by the local people.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

The draft is pretty comprehensive and I applaud the work put into it.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 07:01 PM

Maybe try not to be everything to everyone but define our real strengths is. More support for the creative people living in the county.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 09:38 AM

Interesting that concerts, both Choral and instrumental are only briefly mentioned, often as part of larger festivals. Sadly I could find no mention of the bi-annual Usk Choral Festival There are some large groups such as the Male Voice choirs, the various amateur orchestras and smaller choirs that perform locally, encourage participation and community involvement.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 10:01 AM

Monmouth library cannot deliver craft and art classes anywhere near as effectively as Usk and Abergavenny because the room allocated for this is too small. Yet there is shire hall or bridges both owned by the council...please look into providing adequate classes in Monmouth as there is disparity. Please support festivals that are actually local rather than artificially created to use up funding allocated for rural areas by those in the city.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 06:24 PM

Support for extra curricular musical activity for children

Anonymous

12/07/2025 02:33 PM

I would love to see you mention Plas Gunter Mansion as its probably one of the largest cultural heritage projects in the County - but I know you can't mention everything

Anonymous

12/08/2025 12:25 PM

More staff in library/ hub/postoffice. Usk.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 02:54 PM

Support for local landmarks (the Tabernacle on A48 being a key example).

Anonymous

12/08/2025 03:29 PM

It is all very low key - we do need to have some things that are show stoppers. The Aber Food Festival is a well known event - however, is it dated - how can it be refreshed and made as relevant to locals as it is to visitors - and how can that 1 weekend inspire and create commercial and community activity/profile throughout the year. This approach can be applied to each community - take the lead theme and build - make the Monmouthshire presentation the best, most individual in the UK - rather than undersell, which is how I read the draft plan

Anonymous

12/08/2025 04:11 PM

More of a route to link up with other artists, a lot of us work in isolation and dont know where to go or who to meet.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

it seems like a good start. Training the local press to report on cultural events in a more nuanced way would be helpful, and help create a more cultural feel to their articles.

Anonymous

12/09/2025 11:28 AM

I didn't see anything aligning with how activities will be financed. Without firm financial commitments - whether they be from local funds or otherwise - all we have is a lot of words. Let's face it, the Council cannot even keep the streets clean and tidy at the moment. The road network is still in a sorry state - notwithstanding local repairs in Usk - and we do not have a public transport system that can serve the whole community or transport visitors to-and-from local attractions in a timely manner. The focus on "active travel" is not something I can get excited about as a 67 year-old and we cannot even walk from Llangybi into Usk without putting our lives at risk.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

Stronger cultural tourism. And I do think it's important that the council make spaces easily available

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

Please involve local creatives from professional and amateur. Lots of talent in the area! Consultations that are accessible from venue choice, day, night and give plenty of notice.

Anonymous

12/12/2025 03:01 PM

It would be better if the draft strategy were combined with the tourism strategy and would question the need for a separate cultural strategy as this is the first one. There are only 2 other places in Wales which seem to have one and the Newport one does seem to have a list of outcomes. It would help if it concentrated more on the historical side of our culture with the museums and heritage and historical places and castles as each market town has a castle. It would be better not to include a page on faith as it fails to reflect the traditional and cultural values in Monmouthshire which are still Christian as the Census 2021 shows that is the stated religion of about half of the population of Monmouthshire and fails to include the important events of Christmas and Easter including the turning on of the Christmas lights in the market towns. There are also important historical sites of interest to both local people and visitors within our market towns and villages which are part of what makes Monmouthshire special. The Conwyn cultural strategy 2021-2026 has a section on places, heritage sites, museums and galleries. Worth looking at priority 1 in the Newport cultural strategy 2025-2035 and the 4 outcomes listed on page 22. It is important that Monmouthshire maintains its older heritage buildings like Shire Hall, The Bridges and the former Abergavenny Library. The cultural strategy could include places, heritage sites, museums and galleries and places of historical interest. Some example below: Places of Historic Interest in both towns and villages In Mathern you can look up the history of the St Tewdrics well and the church. Also in Earlswood you can find the oldest Methodist chapel visited by John Wesley on horseback known as the founder of Methodism. Earlswood Chapel It is claimed that this is the oldest Methodist chapel still in use in Wales. Founded in 1791 by Ann Lewis (Rosser) who was so inspired by the preaching of John Wesley that she set up prayer meetings in her little thatched cottage in Earlswood and founded a branch of the Methodist Missionary Society. The cottage soon became too small and money was raised to build the chapel, which was founded in 1791, though it may not have been built until 1799. St Tewdric's Well, Mathern By tradition at this spring King Tewdric's wounds were washed after the battle near Tintern c470 AD against the pagan Saxons. He died a short way off and by his wishes a church (now the village church) was built over his grave. The well, within the Mathern Conservation Area, was restored by Monmouth District Council in 1977. The above details are based on information given on two plaques on the well's enclosure fence. The Shire Hall in Agincourt Square, Monmouth, Wales, is a very important historic building. It was built in 1724 and used to be the main court building for Monmouthshire. In 1839 and 1840, a famous trial took place here. It was the trial of John Frost and other Chartist leaders. They were tried for serious crimes related to their fight for people's rights. The building was also a busy market place. Today, Monmouthshire County Council owns the Shire Hall. Visitors can use audio guides to explore Courtroom 1. It now serves as a Tourist

Information Centre and offices for Monmouth Town Council. Parts of the building are open for everyone to visit. Abergavenny Former Carnegie Library History Built 1905 and designed by B J Francis of Abergavenny. Paid for by the Carnegie Foundation at a cost of £4000 although Andrew Carnegie refused the invitation to open it. It was opened by the Marquis of Abergavenny and the Lord Mayor of London on 8th September 1906. Exterior Coursed squared rock-faced sandstone with Bath stone ashlar quoins and dressings, natural slate roofs. Two storeyed central section flanked by single storey halls at right angles to each other. Gabled elevation in stone facing the corner between Victoria Street and Baker Street, this is the gable end of the left hand hall. Centre section has a large bay window of 4-lights divided by stone mullions and topped by battlements, with small window behind. This is flanked by lancets with traceried heads; six transomed windows to left return; plain roof with central ventilator. The gable has four finials and a central statue of a woman holding a book at the apex. To the right is a two storey section with a Gothic door which is the main entrance, hoodmould with carved stops, the head of Andrew Carnegie (left) and the Marquis of Abergavenny (right), above this is a 3-light stone mullioned window with sash set back to right. To the right again a hall with four windows with transoms, angled ends and a hipped roof with central ventilator. Rear elevation not inspected. The Shire Hall in Agincourt Square, Monmouth, Wales, is a very important historic building. It was built in 1724 and used to be the main court building for Monmouthshire. In 1839 and 1840, a famous trial took place here. It was the trial of John Frost and other Chartist leaders. They were tried for serious crimes related to their fight for people's rights. The building was also a busy market place. Today, Monmouthshire County Council owns the Shire Hall. Visitors can use audio guides to explore Courtroom 1. It now serves as a Tourist Information Centre and offices for Monmouth Town Council. Parts of the building are open for everyone to visit. Castle history for each of the towns

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

More information about venues, activity and local community events. The strategy feels very focused on a few festivals where as there is alot more on offer every day.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

No

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

What is the draft Strategy?

Anonymous

I haven't read it! I think that there is a need to emphasis the key role

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12/16/2025 01:45 PM	Monmouthshire has played and still plays within the development of modern Wales.
Anonymous 12/18/2025 01:45 PM	Monmouth needs to bring in more cultural events like other market towns
Anonymous 12/18/2025 01:45 PM	N/A
Anonymous 12/18/2025 01:45 PM	N/A
Anonymous 12/19/2025 11:57 AM	Not applicable
Anonymous 12/19/2025 01:45 PM	n/a

**Optional question** (74 response(s), 61 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

**Q13 | Finally, do you have thoughts on how can we develop new ways of working collaboratively between the public, private, and voluntary sectors.**

Anonymous 10/31/2025 09:07 AM	In terms of theatre - making an Monmouthshire youth theatre festival.
Anonymous 10/31/2025 09:46 AM	Forming an Arts committee and get volunteers involved.
Anonymous 10/31/2025 09:55 AM	Central website Monthly young artists forum to hear from them,
Anonymous 10/31/2025 12:00 PM	The proposed Creative Alliance needs to be real and accessible. Too often in the past, resources like this have been unknown and invisible to groups that might make use of them - so that a small number "in the know" get the benefits, but others are simply unaware. If the alliance can advise new and existing groups, so that they are aware of opportunities for funding, support, publicity, collaboration, etc., that would be a great and welcome step forward.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 12:28 PM

clear communication, easy to find information about how to volunteer, what's available,

Anonymous

10/31/2025 02:38 PM

Its difficult to answer this.....

Anonymous

10/31/2025 03:02 PM

What happened to night classes? These can help the local community and economy by building knowledge and skills. All you need is the space, volunteers and good marketing. I am probably not atypical in being happy to teach on a voluntary basis.

Anonymous

10/31/2025 08:52 PM

There seems to be a very fragmentary approach, lots of people contributing to the vibrant cultural life but no one place to find out what's happening. It's great that Monmouthshire has appeared in films but we are bigger than that. There are so many talented M experienced and knowledgeable people in the Shire who could help to create a strong cultural identity. Use them

Anonymous

11/01/2025 08:14 AM

Credit must be given to MCC for being more open to this than many councils! I wonder if GAVO's 'Community Conversations' could be a model for specifically arts/culture-based monthly forums?

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:09 AM

Financial help

Anonymous

11/01/2025 09:42 AM

The recent thriving community event in Abergavenny was great but a list of local volunteer groups who you contacted individually to advertise the event in advance would help. Create a list of interested parties ready to contact for any events.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 10:49 AM

As suggested a central website with details of clubs, groups and societies in county. Also opportunities for volunteering.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:10 PM

Highways so people can get to towns, events, historic monuments.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 12:24 PM

Monmouthshire could link groups more easily through a shared cultural network — an online hub or quarterly forum connecting artists, venues, schools, and local businesses. Public and private partnerships could be encouraged, with local shops and cafés hosting

or sponsoring creative events. Shared community spaces and “cultural corners” would bring together crafts, wellbeing, and education. Simple communication tools — like a joint mailing list or “What’s On” guide — would help raise visibility, while local cultural connectors could keep projects and people linked across the county.

[Redacted]

11/01/2025 01:29 PM

Greater degree of information sharing as well as funding, as well as information about where other sources of funding can be accessed

Anonymous

11/01/2025 01:44 PM

No

Anonymous

11/01/2025 03:25 PM

Perhaps a citizens panel to promote links between the different sectors.

[Redacted]

11/01/2025 07:45 PM

Talk directly to the local groups already doing so much in their own towns, and provide a conduit and forum for getting those groups to talk to each other so that the whole can become greater than the sum of their parts.

Anonymous

11/01/2025 07:51 PM

Encourage community councils to seek out and list cultural activities in the community and to support them financially using Section 137 Funding

Anonymous

11/01/2025 11:54 PM

Contacting local people to discover our thoughts and ideas of our culture and ways of life.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 03:31 PM

Incorporate sponsorship more.

Anonymous

11/02/2025 05:08 PM

Follow the good examples, collaborations and best practice currently delivering results in Circular Economy teams and Outdoors Access teams.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 07:33 AM

Sit down and talk in person with each other.

Anonymous

11/03/2025 02:59 PM

A one-stop web page. Using the Arts & Business Cymru template as a way of sourcing private funding and sponsorship.

Anonymous

11/06/2025 06:10 PM

see 10 above. It isn't hard to do this, but don't set your sights too high, and become totally immune to adverse publicity. Take chances - act like real artists have to do every day of their lives.

Anonymous

11/07/2025 03:03 PM

?

Anonymous

11/07/2025 04:22 PM

Yes - firstly understand the sectors better - we confident in the relationship between creativity and wealth creation, support the artists, organisations with joined up thinking. Claim credit for outcomes health, well being, diversity and inclusion, employment and employability - do not add layers of talking shops - try things evaluate, replicate be agile and innovative not safe with so many guard rails that partnership is meaningless.

Anonymous

11/10/2025 05:00 PM

Engage with Monmouthshire's Local Access Forum. Advertise opportunities or wants! Engage with officers already out on the ground who can spread messages and get others involved. Newsletter to parents at schools

Anonymous

11/12/2025 09:16 AM

Communication and funding. More of both of these.

Anonymous

11/14/2025 01:43 PM

There area well known safe places in each area . Perhaps an electronic notice board in places like the Shire Hall behind the railings . The same thing in Abergavenny Market etc . Let us see whats on.

Anonymous

11/15/2025 09:12 AM

Weekend events , hub

Anonymous

11/15/2025 01:19 PM

Keep talking. Keep meeting.

Anonymous

11/17/2025 08:09 PM

Get somebody managing the Borough who is knowledgeable about the industry. Tribute bands are not culture!

  
11/18/2025 12:47 AM

I will have to think about that. One thing that stops me going out is lack of taxis to get home of a night perhaps there could be a list of night service taxis, or a small mini bus when events are on. transport in Abergavenny is pretty dreadful.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 03:36 PM

Utilising empty high street shop windows with high quality artwork and history displays. Work in conjunction with Cadaw, local and national museums & art galleries and the shop owners. A fantastic display will encourage visitors and prospective shop renters/buyers rather than tatty, dirty windows with trailing electrical cables. Get the publicity out to a wider audience.

Anonymous

11/18/2025 08:25 PM

Monmouthshire should have representation : Eisteddfod

[REDACTED]

As above

11/19/2025 01:53 PM

Anonymous

11/21/2025 03:39 PM

Public consultation is vital, but most importantly listening to the feedback from the community at large. Volunteers give up their time and are 'boots on the ground', but the community itself can have wider views that also need to be obtained.

Anonymous

11/23/2025 04:06 AM

Involve all ares of society in its creation

Anonymous

11/24/2025 06:21 PM

Regular meetings/ workshops between the decision makers of MCC and representatives of the local user groups.

Anonymous

11/26/2025 08:28 AM

Yes, 100%. Arrange to allow creatives to meet and hear what they wish to achieve. Help them. Support new talent.

Anonymous

11/27/2025 11:40 AM

This strategy is a good start on which to build

Anonymous

11/27/2025 02:42 PM

Work with people like Cwmpas to facilitate a series of public conversations between interested parties to dissolve silos, create connections etc. <https://cwmpas.coop/start-something-good/how-it-works/> OR DIY using the World Cafe method <https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

Anonymous

11/27/2025 06:28 PM

Reach out and work more in partnership.

[REDACTED]

Anonymous

11/28/2025 01:21 PM

Improving communication pathways, particularly when it comes to communication with the general public and with groups of volunteers (the backbone of many cultural events that make Monmouth such a special place to live)

Anonymous

12/01/2025 05:38 AM

Support the private sector with reasonable rent and they will return the favour. Actually partner with private sector to deliver rather than looking for sponsorship. Working in partnership can be magic in the strength of the outcome for all.

Anonymous

12/02/2025 08:20 PM

Shared promotion- find all activities, events etc in one place

Anonymous

12/05/2025 02:25 PM

A community website or portal where events can be added and people can coordinate. For example, if I want to set up an event in my area, the LA could help with some advice on the permissions I need as well as open up links to other groups and even get volunteers.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 03:22 PM

Acceptance that there is not a boundary between the people on the borders. Public, private and voluntary sectors should not be confined by lines on a map or by postcodes. Be kind and inclusive. Life should not have boundaries.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 04:20 PM

Keep asking people for their views. Most people "have an opinion" so... ask for it. Keep supporting local venues.

Anonymous

12/05/2025 07:01 PM

A Monmouthshire wide open studios weekend or festival .  
Monmouthshire charity fund that links businesses and donate with artists and events that need funding

Anonymous

12/06/2025 08:37 AM

We'll start listen to what people from this have to say about your excessive building. If you can't afford to live in Monmouthshire you need to move to an area you can afford. Simple as that. I can't afford to live in London or Beaconsfield or the Cotswolds so I live here. I don't go to Beaconsfield and demand them to get me a discounted house.

Anonymous

12/06/2025 10:01 AM

Actually engage with the people in the community. Rather than imposing your views on them. For example how many people of Monmouth agreed to the pinch point ? How many people of

Monmouth wanted the wooden troughs dropped from a lorry along Monnow st? How many wanted the museum move? Why is that building empty when I could be a vibrant indoor market? Monmouth cultural heritage is a thriving Market town but the "Butter Market" is closed completely by MCC. Start listening to what the people want

Anonymous

12/06/2025 06:24 PM

Maybe a forum/platform for all the musical groups to communicate/liaise.

Anonymous

12/07/2025 02:33 PM

Firtsly its about taleking to each other more often and a forum bringing groups together across the county - that doesnt feel like its a local government meeting - is a good place to begin

Anonymous

12/08/2025 12:25 PM

More funding community hub.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 02:54 PM

Making more extensive use of volunteers - but I don't have any clever ideas about how!

Anonymous

12/08/2025 03:29 PM

Bring new people and perspectives into the discussions - local people and those with knowledge/skills - and take indepth looks at what is happening in other parts of the UK/World - we are often limited by our experience and need to be challenged. Have a budget for testing ideas - to work with the many different organisations involved in culture - allowing the unusual to be tested and monitored. Be adventurous.

Anonymous

12/08/2025 06:19 PM

Speak of the arts as if you know they have great value to society and our area. Sing successes loud, and give them recognition, then the sectors will start valuing them too.

Anonymous

12/10/2025 09:49 AM

Yes I do. Please feel free to contact me 

Anonymous

12/10/2025 11:58 AM

Make use of the settings from the castles, halls, museums on our doorstep! Engage with the schools, children and local organisations. Reach out to local businesses. Please plan and give notice of events. Most artists, businesses are working 3-6months in advance on projects.

Anonymous

12/13/2025 11:07 PM

Reviewing who the key stakeholders are across Monmouthshire and understanding how they can mutually support each other. For example, ensuring arts and health are joined up..and helping businesses understand where they can support and find mutual benefit working with cultural venues and community organisations.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 09:16 AM

Advertising more and inform people whats happening. Very often we don't know.

Anonymous

12/15/2025 10:45 AM

No



12/15/2025 11:26 AM

Getting GP's involved in referring people to groups run by volunteers that could help them

Anonymous

12/15/2025 11:36 AM

Communicate - Open day/evenings

Anonymous

12/15/2025 01:45 PM

A wider and broader approach in how services are delivered, defining shared goals and outcomes

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

More understanding with in the community

Anonymous

12/16/2025 01:45 PM

Not at the moment.

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

co-operating with each other and not competing

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Links with: U3A, Schools, Sports clubs

Anonymous

12/18/2025 01:45 PM

Nothing added

Anonymous

12/19/2025 11:57 AM

Definitely need more for young people. More financial help for community centres, both run by volunteers and council run. Also youth clubs and day centres for disabled adults and those suffering from mental illness e.g Mardy Resource Centre (growing spaces) and the old Tudor Day Centre

Anonymous

12/19/2025 01:45 PM

Really important to work with schools and different ethnic groups etc.  
to encourage people to support projects. More publicity!

**Optional question** (74 response(s), 61 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

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# Integrated Impact Assessment document

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

<p><b>Name of the Officer</b> completing the evaluation Tracey Thomas</p> <p><b>Phone no:</b> 01633 644295 <b>E-mail:</b> traceythomas@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</b> Seeking approval of Monmouthshire’s Cultural Strategy 2026-2036 – the strategic plan that champions cultural activity and creates sustainable and inclusive cultural growth in Monmouthshire.</p>
<p><b>Name of Service area</b> Place and Community Wellbeing</p>	<p><b>Date</b> 02/02/2026</p>

Page 203

1. 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 Plan promotes an inclusive cultural offer across Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts of this strategy on protected characteristics. The strategy aims to improve inclusiveness and accessibility of cultural activity for the benefit of residents and visitors.	The cultural strategy is a coherent plan that sets out purpose, priorities, and actions for nurturing and sustaining the arts, heritage, and creative industries within our county

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 strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	The strategy aims to improve inclusiveness and accessibility of cultural activity for the benefit of residents. It will work with stakeholders/event organisers/venues and infrastructure to ensure they are accessible and inclusive – physically, in terms of the product offer and in the way they're promoted.	The strategy aims to improve and increase cultural activity across Monmouthshire.
Gender reassignment	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
Marriage or civil partnership	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
Pregnancy or maternity	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
Race	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
Religion or Belief	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	<b>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic</b>	<b>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic</b>	<b>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>

Sex	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.
Sexual Orientation	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.	There are no negative impacts.	The strategy aims to improve accessibility to cultural activities for benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.

## 2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

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

	<b>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage</b>	<b>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.</b>	<b>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
<b>Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice</b>	The strategy is based on fair treatment and equitable status of all groups and individuals in the community, aiming to grow the cultural offer for everyone in Monmouthshire, whether as a visitor or resident.	There are no identified negative impacts.	The strategy aims to support growth in cultural industries for the benefit of everyone in Monmouthshire.

## 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
<b>Policy Making</b> Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	The strategy celebrates and promotes Welsh language and sense of place as important elements of the cultural offer.	There are no negative impacts.	Welsh language holds a cultural and historical significance for Monmouthshire, serving as a vital expression of local identity and heritage and is underpinned throughout the strategy.
<b>Operational</b> Recruitment & Training of workforce	N/A	No posts are being created at this time.	N/A
<b>Service delivery</b> Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	The strategy will not impact on the equal status given to the Welsh language in service delivery. Welsh language and culture will be celebrated as critical aspects of the county's cultural strategy to strengthens community cohesion, supports educational opportunities, and attracts visitors who are keen to experience authentic Welsh culture.	None.	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?
<p><b>A prosperous Wales</b> Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>The strategy aims to support the wealth of creative talent we have within the county. It will support this ecosystem through established partnership, by offering training, networking, low cost/affordable spaces, and opportunities to showcase work.</p>	<p>The strategy identifies the best prospects for sustainable growth of Monmouthshire's creative industries. There are no identified negative impacts.</p>
<p><b>A resilient Wales</b> Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>The strategy promotes safe and responsible cultural activity across the county.</p>	<p>We will work with partners, stakeholders and creatives to promote safe and responsible cultural activity.</p>
<p><b>A healthier Wales</b> People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Access to cultural activity, the arts and heritage enhance mental health, reduces social isolation, and improves overall well-being. Our cultural strategy will commit to making culture accessible to all, by creating more inclusive events, and removing barriers to participation.</p>	<p>The strategy aims to encourage use of our outdoor facilities and spaces to provide opportunities for everyone in Monmouthshire.</p>
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b> Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>The strategy will support vibrant communities - culture is a source of pride and resilience, helping individuals and communities to flourish, the cultural strategy will nurture the next generation creating sustainable and connected places.</p>	<p>The cultural strategy would bring together the county's unique assets - its history, landscapes, traditions, and people under a shared vision for the future.</p>
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b> Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>The strategy will encourage responsible cultural activity to ensure that our heritage, spaces and places are looked after for future generations to enjoy</p>	<p>The impact of increased cultural activity will be monitored, and any negative trends will be addressed based on relevant data and understandings.</p>

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?
<p><b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b> Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	<p>Creating a cultural strategy for Monmouthshire will assist in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the county, ensuring that future generations can appreciate and learn from it.</p>	<p>The strategy promotes a confident cultural identity, healthy and active lifestyles and a cohesive heritage offer celebrating sense of place and Welsh culture.</p>
<p><b>A more equal Wales</b> People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>The strategy supports sustainable growth of Monmouthshire's cultural offer for the benefit of everyone in the county irrespective of background or circumstances.</p>	<p>The strategy aims to sustainably grow Monmouthshire's cultural offer and promote access to a wide variety of enriching experiences for everyone in Monmouthshire regardless of circumstances.</p>

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**5. 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>	<p>This is a 10-year strategy with an initial two-year action plan. The creation of a Cultural Partnership Forum will be supported from experts in the field along with officers who collectively will design the full action plan to ensure the Monmouthshire is the most inspiring, connected and creative place in Wales to visit and live.</p>	<p>The strategy is a blueprint and stepping stone for further actions. It aims to support and inspire those working in the creative industries and those who enjoy participating or visiting cultural activity.</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>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b></p>	<p>The strategy has been developed through local and national research and in collaboration with a wide range of local creatives, stakeholders and businesses. It's been designed to be co-owned by everyone in Monmouthshire and to inspire collaboration and co-creation.</p>	<p>The strategy and action plans delivery will be overseen by a newly created Cultural Forum, made up of public, private and third sector partners.</p>
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p><b>Involvement</b></p>	<p>The strategy to date, has been informed by extensive engagement with stakeholders (including MCC services, creatives, businesses, partners) and its delivery will be overseen by the newly formed Cultural Forum, made up of public, private and third sector partners.</p>	<p>Resource allowing, regular engagement and annual surveys will be undertaken to assess satisfaction with the way the cultural offer is being developed and managed for our residents and visitors.</p>
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p> <p><b>Prevention</b></p>	<p>A range of wellbeing measures will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Cultural Forum. Any potential issues will be regularly communicated to partnership to enable to them to address them promptly</p>	<p>Resource allowing, regular engagement and annual surveys will be undertaken to assess satisfaction with the way the cultural offer is being developed and managed for our residents and visitors., and to identify any wider issues not identified by the cultural forum.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p> <p><b>Integration</b></p>	<p>The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Monmouthshire Corporate and Community Plan both outline the need to move towards a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales and a resilient Wales. We will deliver this through:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire</li> <li>• Inking with Placemaking; Economy, Skills and Enterprise and Destination Management teams to ensure cross working</li> <li>• Enhancing the cultural offer across the county that deliver opportunities to reduce loneliness and social isolation</li> </ul>	<p>None identified at this time</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging physical activity through our places and spaces of the county</li> <li>• Commit to making culture accessible to all, by creating more inclusive events, and removing barriers to participation</li> </ul>	
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**6. 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 impacts on safeguarding.	There are no impacts on safeguarding.	There are no impacts on safeguarding.
Corporate Parenting	There are no impacts on corporate parenting.	There are no impacts on corporate parenting.	There are no impacts on corporate parenting.

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

The Plan has been informed by the following data :

- Consultation workshops held with local creatives, stakeholders including National Trust, CADW, Cardiff University, Creative Cardiff, town and community councils, MCC councillors, MCC officers, cultural businesses, and event organisers.
- Public consultation is running from 31<sup>st</sup> October – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025
- Monmouthshire Community and Corporate Plan 2022 - 2028
- Monmouthshire town Placemaking Plans
- Place Scrutiny Committee 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026

8. **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?**

As a county, Monmouthshire is at an exciting point as it cherishes its past and is eager to shape its future. As included in the Community and Corporate Plan under a Fairer Place to Live – we will develop an inclusive cultural strategy working with our partners and communities across the county. We are now able to share a Cultural Strategy for Monmouthshire that honours the unique character of this county, drawing strength from its landscapes, heritage and people. The cultural strategy is a coherent plan that sets out purpose, priorities, and actions for nurturing and sustaining the arts, heritage, and creative industries within our county. It provides a framework for decision-making, helps secure funding, fosters partnerships, and measures progress. For Monmouthshire, a cultural strategy would bring together the county's unique assets - its history, landscapes, traditions, and people under a shared vision for the future.

The Council will need to work across departments and to use all levers available to support culture activity, in tandem with businesses, creatives, stakeholders and the residents of Monmouthshire to grow cultural activity for the benefit of everyone in the county. There is recognition that this isn't a strategy and plan that the Council could deliver on its own, and that we also need buy in from partners and their support to deliver on priorities.

**9. 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
Analyse and collate all responses to the public consultation for the draft cultural strategy	December 2025 – January 2026	Tracey Thomas/Rachael Rogers

**10. 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.**

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
2	SLT and Business Cabinet	13 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2026	To revise action plan to include clear outcomes and impact
3	Place Scrutiny	29/01/2026	To consider comments and recommendations from scrutiny committee and reflect changes in the strategy
4	Cabinet	11/02/26	

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Development of a Supported Accommodation Provision</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>Monmouth</b>

## 1. PURPOSE:

To provide details and seek approval for the acquisition and refurbishment of a property in Monmouth for the purpose of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people (aged 16 plus), using existing borrowing headroom.

Approval is sought based on a Business Case that is attached as Appendix 1.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To acquire and refurbish a property in Monmouth for the purposes of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people.
- To utilise a Housing with Care Fund grant for the entirety of the capital expenditure associated with the acquisition and subsequent redevelopment of the property (subject to ministerial approval).
- To the extent that Housing with Care Fund grant is not secured for the full amount requested, that any sum remaining to be funded is met from the £3m borrowing headroom agreed at Full Council meeting 18th April 2024 under a 10-year term.
- To enter into a contract with a suitable external provider to provide the housing-based support for young people residing at the property.

## 3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Children's Services has identified a property in Monmouth which is suitable to be developed into a supported accommodation provision for up to 3 care experienced young people aged between 16 – 21 years of age.

3.2 In order to meet the needs of the young people and the identified objectives of the service the property will require refurbishing.

3.3 The provision will provide a homely setting for 3 care experienced young people, where 24-hour support will be available to assist the young people to develop their independent living skills. During their stay in the provision the goal is to equip the young people to progress onwards to accommodation with a lower intensity of support or into independent accommodation. In this sense the provision will form the first step in a young person's pathway to independence.

3.4 Alongside of refurbishing the property the intention is to seek to commission and enter into a contract with a suitable external provider that has experience of providing accommodation based support to young people. A robust evaluation process and on-going contract monitoring will be put in place to ensure that quality standards are maintained and that young people are provided with the individualised support they require.

3.5 The business case is set out in the context of the decisions made at full Council on 18th April 2024 which set out proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16 plus supported accommodation placements and increased the available borrowing headroom to £3M for that purpose.

3.6 The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are looked after which includes a range of supported accommodation options for young people who have left, or who are preparing to leave care. At present, the Local Authority has insufficient suitable supported accommodation placements and limited options for young people who have medium to high support needs.

3.7 Insufficiency of placements creates a number of pressures and issues for the service including:

- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.
- Young people being placed away from their communities and support networks, creating barriers to independence and unnecessary change for young people.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for young people in respect of ensuring that they have been afforded opportunities for skill development.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child / young person resulting in the need to enter into placement arrangements that are outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Risk of a young person being placed somewhere that is beyond their capabilities.
- Workforce pressure and increased travel costs because of children / young people being placed in numerous different locations;
- Resource pressure because of the time it takes to source external placements and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

3.8 The current ambition, as set out in the report presented to Council on 18th April 2024, is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types including fostering, residential and supported accommodation placements over the next 1 – 3 years. This will ensure that the needs of Monmouthshire's Looked After Children and those young people who are leaving care are consistently met with increased opportunity to be placed closer to their homes and communities. Increasing the number of placements that are within the control of the Local Authority will also enable increased stability and certainty in our wider care planning for children and young people.

3.9 To meet the assessed needs of our looked after children and young people our current commissioning data confirms that to help achieve sufficiency in terms of placement numbers and options we currently need a further medium to high supported accommodation provision. This takes into account the current 5-bed supported accommodation provision that opened in

November 2024 and the 5-bed provision that is scheduled to become operational during the next financial year.

3.10 In summary, the primary objective of the Business Case is for up to 3 young people to be suitably matched and to be enabled to live comfortably and well in the property in keeping with their individual pathway planning needs.

3.11 The business case aims to achieve the following service improvements:

- To increase the number of young people who are placed closer to their homes and communities and in a way that meets their personal outcomes and care planning needs.
- To improve services for care experienced young people through ensuring that there are appropriate placements available to them which enable them to develop their independent living skills in a safe and supportive environment.
- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.
- To secure better value for money and the potential to reduce revenue costs associated with the current arrangements.
- To improve welfare considerations and efficiencies for the children’s services workforce due to reduced travel time.
- To support the Council to meet legal and regulatory requirements under SSWBA regulations.

3.12 Acquisition of the property is through the open market from a private buyer. There are some property related risks identified within the business case, mitigated by a number of necessary conditions being attached to the offer including full legal due diligence (satisfactory searches etc).

3.13 Implementation risks to the Local Authority in running a supported accommodation provision are set out in the table below.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Unable to secure a service provider	The Council will be using an Open Procurement Route via Sell2Wales. Previous similar procurement processes were successful.
Delays / inability to identify and match suitable young people who need the supported accommodation provision	The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual young people and how they might match. Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children / young people who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home.
Refurbishing costs exceed what is currently provided for.	There is a contingency for unexpected works in the costs and a process for additional grant funding application via the Notification of Event (NoE) process.
Unsuccessful grant application leading to MCC meeting cost of refurbishment.	The grant application has been approved and is at final stage (ministerial approval).

	The costs of drawing down on borrowing have been factored into the business case.
Delays in approving the property acquisition will result in identified property being acquired by other buyers.	Maintain strong communication with agents and vendors.

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

4.1 The business case seeks to increase the sufficiency of appropriate placements closer to home for care experienced children and supports the repatriation of Monmouthshire children back into the county. The provision will enable care experienced young people to develop their life skills and support their pathway to independence so that their future life chances and economic mobility are improved. The provision is designed for care experienced young people who have medium to high support needs, where this is currently a gap in provision. This additional stepping stone approach will help vulnerable young people sustain future stable accommodation and tenancies.

4.2 The money currently being spent on this cohort of children includes residential and independent foster care placements, some of which are located out of county. The project will allow the development of provision in county. This will support young people's sense of identity, belonging and connectivity with support networks, as well as providing the opportunity for new jobs and training / career opportunities for the wider social care workforce.

4.3 Planning is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is encouraged within the scheme and community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward.

#### **5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

5.1 An options appraisal is set out in the business case. In summary the council could chose to do nothing and refrain from moving ahead with the scheme. This would avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified at 3.13. This option is not recommended in that i) it would not fill the gap in existing provision and continue to mean that children preparing to leave care are not provided with the right level of support in keeping with their needs and ii) that the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against the current approximate annual spend of £446,000 .

5.2 Two minimal options are identified the first being to withdraw from the current property and wait for an alternative property to become available that costs less or requires less refurbishment. This would avoid any property risks specific to this purchase but is discounted on the basis that i) further delay would compromise the Council's ability to secure a capital grant for the acquisition and refurbishment and because ii) this is a suitable and desirable property that is well located and requires minimal refurbishment. Suitable properties such as this do not come onto the market frequently.

5.3 The second minimal option is to proceed with the repurposing of the property and seek to develop the support element in-house. This option is discounted because i) it is felt that there is strong experience and expertise within the sector providing accommodation-based support and ii) that children's services does not currently have the resources or capacity to undertake the support element and iii) it is likely that a procurement route will be quicker.

5.4 The option as set out within the business case, for the Council to acquire and refurbish the property and seek to enter into a contract with a suitable organisation to provide the support, is the preferred option.

## **6. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Success criteria for the business case have been identified as follows:

- Completion of the purchase prior to 31st March 2026.
- The property is acquired and refurbished to a high standard.
- A capital grant is received to reduce any borrowing strain on the Council.
- A service provider is successfully appointed and a contract and monitoring arrangements are in place.
- The first cohort of young peoples are successfully matched and in-situ.
- Young people achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new scheme.
- Young people are supported to move on to living independently.

## **7. REASONS:**

7.1 In summary, the business case represents an important next step in the Council's ambition to increase the overall number of in-house placements for children including supported living accommodation. This will increase the service's ability to appropriately plan and control care pathways for children and young people in keeping with their needs and reduce the Council's dependency on an uncertain provider market.

7.2 The proposed development of the property will meet the wellbeing and safeguarding needs of care experienced young people and provide an affordable means by which the Council can provide good quality support. The business case supports the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient and suitable for children who are looked after and is in keeping with national and local policy direction.

7.3 The business case represents a service development opportunity, to improve outcomes for children, generate savings for the council and maximise potential grant funding.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

### Capital Costs of Acquisition and Refurbishment

8.1 The Local Authority has applied to Welsh Government for a £675,450 Housing with Care fund capital grant to purchase and redevelop the property over the 2025/26 funding stream for the acquisition and 2026/27 funding stream for refurbishment. This would provide a 100% grant

funded resource for the development of provision. Welsh Government approved the grant application on 21<sup>st</sup> January, confirming Part 1 of the funding to cover 100% of the capital required for the acquisition of the property, subject to final ministerial sign-off. Part 2 of the grant application, which will relate to the refurbishment and redevelopment works, will be prepared and submitted in the new financial year. The risk of the grant application not being approved is low because of the purchase being achievable before year end and because the project represents good return on investment in line with Welsh Government programmes.

8.2 We require access to the capital borrowing headroom pending the HCF grant application being approved and available; or in the unlikely event that it is not approved.

8.3 In light of the above we have modelled both scenarios i) that the capital scheme is fully funded via a grant and ii) that the capital element is met through prudential borrowing.

8.4 The revenue costs of prudential borrowing are already factored into the Council's medium term treasury budgets and therefore there are no consequential borrowing cost implications on the Children's services budget. However, for transparency and to aid in a meaningful like-for-like comparison between the existing model of service delivery and this proposal, an indicative annual borrowing cost has been included within the business case calculation.

#### Annual Revenue Costs

8.5 To develop a prospective business case we have used a mid-point unit cost of children who are currently placed in external residential or foster placements. For 3 children this represents £446,000 per annum spend against the placement budget.

8.6 Whilst we have a cohort of children who would potentially benefit from a move to the provision, the dynamic nature of our detailed care-planning makes it unfeasible to accurately pin-down the exact 3 young people identified until nearer completion. Using the mid-point average cost of placements associated with these children currently provides a reasonably accurate illustration of the cost envelope.

8.7 The cost of commissioning the support element of the scheme has been calculated based on an equivalent service model in our Caldicot property (i.e. Local Authority owned property with a 3rd party contract to provide the care).

8.8 Taking into account the varying cost impact of the 2 potential borrowing scenarios as above, we have modelled the revenue costs against a 100% occupancy rate and an 80% occupancy rate. These tables are illustrative because the identified savings / or the impact on savings arising from a void cannot be easily identified due to the variability of existing package of care. Equally, there may be situations where placements result in cost avoidance. This potential saving will contribute to the overall £1m Children's Services practice change mandate for 2026/27. As the project is scheduled to come online until part way through the 2026/27 year, the full annual savings potential will not be realised until 2027/28.

8.9 80% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the provision.

### 8.10 Based on 100% occupancy

<b>Annual Revenue Costs</b>	<b>Based on successful HCF application</b> £	<b>Based on borrowing to complete the development</b> £
<b>Service Provider Contract</b>	257,799.36	257,799.36
<b>General Maintenance</b>	10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 29/01/26</b>	0	82,288.00
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS</b>	267,799.36	350,087.36
<b>ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS</b>	£446,000	£446,000
<b>Based on 100% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS</b>	178,201	95,913

### 8.11 Based on 80% occupancy

<b>Annual Revenue Costs</b>	<b>Based on successful HCF application</b> £	<b>Based on borrowing to complete the development</b> £
<b>Service Provider Contract</b>	257,799.36	257,799.36
<b>General Maintenance</b>	10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 29/01/26</b>	0	82,288.00
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS</b>	267,799.36	350,087.36
<b>ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS</b>	446,000	446,000
<b>Based on 80% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS</b>	142,561	76,731

8.12 If voids arise, and there are no young people identified within Monmouthshire who would need the placement in the foreseeable future, there is potential to offer the placement to another Local Authority with a slight mark-up to the weekly cost.

## 9. CONSULTEES:

- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Nicholas Keyes, Estates Development Manger

- Ben Thorpe, Estates Development Surveyor
- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Scott Hereford, Residential and Resource Service Manager
- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Council Report 18th April 2024 - Developing children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements

**11. AUTHOR:**

**Jane Rodgers, Strategic Director Social Care, Safeguarding & Health**

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# ACQUISITION PROPERTY IN MONMOUTH TO PROVIDE A REGISTERED SUPPORTED LIVING ACCOMODATION

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**SINGLE-STAGE BUSINESS CASE - MEDIUM VALUE AND RISK - (£250K TO £2  
MILLION VALUE OF PROCUREMENT)**

**Author:**

**Jane Rodgers**

**Chief Officer, Social Care and Health**



**Date (26.01.2026)**

**Consultees:**

- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services (TBC)
- Nicholas Keyes, Head of Landlord Services.
- Ben Thorpe, Estates Development Surveyor
- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Scott Hereford, Residential and Resource Service Manager
- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Children's Services seek approval to acquire the property in Monmouth, to provide a supported lodgings (accommodation) provision for 3 Monmouthshire care experienced young people aged 16-24. This provision will be available to consider supporting all our 16+ Looked After children and in the future will specifically complement our existing children's Residential Home in Monmouth. The provision will create a structured step-down pathway to independence and ensure that children can move from residential care to semi-independent living within the same local area, maintaining friendships, support networks, and community. Additionally, the resource would support the Council's commitment to work towards the eradication of profit from the care of Children Looked After, in accordance with the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act.

Monmouthshire currently has two Local Authority owned supported accommodation properties and requires one further facility to provide suitable placements for young people and reduce our reliance on third party providers.

The subject property has sufficient space for 3 bedrooms together with adequate provision for sleeping-in arrangements for support staff. There is sufficient space for communal areas for recreational activity and there is accessible outdoor space with a rear garden for the young people to utilize.

The proposed use of the property would be to accommodate 3 young people aged between 16-24 for a transitional period to assist in their step-down from care and support. The provision will provide a medium-to-high level of support, in a homely setting, to assist and equip the young people with the skills required to live more independently. In this sense the provision will support a young person's pathway to independence.

This approach ensures that the individual needs of children are consistently and appropriately met, while providing greater opportunities for placements closer to their homes and communities. Expanding the number of placements managed by the Local Authority will promote stability and certainty in broader care planning for children and young people. It will also strengthen integrated working practices and enhance the quality oversight of the care provided.

This business case therefore seeks approval:

- To acquire and refurbish the property for the purposes of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people.
- To utilise a Housing with Care Fund grant for the entirety of the capital expenditure associated with the acquisition and subsequent refurbishment of the property. [Welsh Government approved the grant application on 21<sup>st</sup> January, confirming Part 1 of the funding to cover 100% of the capital required for the acquisition of the property, subject to final ministerial sign-off. Part 2 of the grant application, which will relate to the refurbishment and redevelopment works, will be prepared and submitted in the new financial year.]

- To the extent that Housing with Care Fund grant is not secured for the full amount requested that any sum remaining to be funded is met from the £3m borrowing headroom agreed at Full Council meeting 18th April 2024 under a 10-year term.
- To enter into a contract with a suitable external provider to provide the housing-based support for young people residing at the property.

Developing a council owned supported accommodation provision managed by a 3rd party provider is in keeping with the Welsh Government legislation aimed at removing profit from children's care and is an important next step in MCC's ambition to increase overall sufficiency of placements for children.

This business case is set out within the context of the decisions made at full Council 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 regarding proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements, subject to appropriate business cases and cabinet approval

## **2 STRATEGIC CASE**

### **2.1 Context**

Aligned to its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, under Section 75 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 the Local Authority has a legal duty to ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are Looked After. Under Part 6 of the Act the Local Authority has a duty "where reasonably practical" to provide Children Looked After/Care Experienced Children with accommodation which is (a) within the authority's area, and (b) meets the needs of those children.

There is a national shortage of residential placements for young people aged 16 and over. This issue has worsened due to instability in the private care market following Welsh Government's policy to remove profit from children's care.

Within Monmouthshire, this lack of available placements applies also to supported accommodation provision which is used to support care experienced young people aged 16 plus who are on their pathway to increased independence.

Such provision that is available, is quickly saturated because of difficulties in securing move-on accommodation. A lack of throughput across the system can mean that young people remain in foster care or residential settings for longer than is in-keeping with their need for increased independence; and simultaneously blocks placements for other children.

This creates a number of challenges and risks for the service including:

- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.

- Young people being placed away from their communities and support networks, creating barriers to independence and unnecessary change for young people.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for young people in respect of ensuring that they have been afforded opportunities for skill development.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child / young person resulting in the need to enter into placement arrangements that are outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Risk of a young person being placed somewhere that is beyond their capabilities.
- Workforce pressure and increased travel costs because of children / young people being placed in numerous different locations;
- Resource pressure because of the time it takes to source external placements and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

Children’s Services have been working to expand the provision of supported accommodation and have been actively searching the market for a third property. This process has been challenging, as we require a home that is welcoming, located close to Monmouth town, and near our existing residential home. When looking to source a new property we have worked closely with our Estates Team to ensure value for money that meets the needs and specifications of both Estates and Children’s Services.

## 2.2 Current Progress

The current ambition, as set out in the report presented to Council on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types in various parts of the County over the next 1 – 3 years.

### Our progress to date since April 2024

Provision (type/beds)	Where are we / progress	Cost / Financed
Monmouth Residential (4 bed)	Following a significant refurbishment, the home opened and gained CIW Registration in July 2025. There are 4 young people are living at the home. Early indication is that the children’s wellbeing has improved since returning home to Monmouthshire. This has been achieved by a dedicated well-trained in-house staffing team.	HCF approved grant
Caldicot Residential (4 bed)	Design and technical surveys have been completed, and	The property is owned by Pobl. They have submitted

	works are due to commence Feb 2026. The home will provide care and support for up to 4 young people.	an IRCF grant application to the regional partnership board for the refurbishment costs
Caldicot Supported Accommodation (5 bed)	Service opened in November 2024 (see below)	MCC owned asset. Refurbishment works were covered by an approved HCF grant application.
Abergavenny Supported Accommodation (5 bed)	Design and technical have been completed. Currently out to the tendering framework and refurbishment works. A non-for-profit 3 <sup>rd</sup> provider has been appointed to run the service.	IRCF approved grant
Abergavenny Bespoke Residential (2 bed)	Care is currently being provided by an external provider. Exploratory works are currently being undertaken to consider the option of bringing the care and support element in house.	
Magor Bespoke Residential (2 bed)	Refurbishment works are currently being completed. Plans to become a 2 bedded CIW registered residential home with care being provided by an in-house residential team from April 26 onwards	MCC owned property supported by an HCF grant to refurbish for a 2 bed provision.

Since opening our first supported accommodation provision in Caldicot, the service has provided structured, practical support to five young people, enabling them to develop essential life skills in preparation for adulthood. Young people have made strong progress in key areas including risk management, budgeting and financial awareness, menu planning and cooking, maintaining a clean-living environment, and independent travel. They have also been encouraged to take part in sports clubs and community activities, helping to build confidence, social connections, and healthy routines.

Each young person has followed an individualised support plan tailored to their needs, strengths, and goals. Staff have helped them to practice real-life tasks, develop problem-solving skills, and build confidence in managing day-to-day responsibilities with increasing independence.

The service has successfully supported one young person to transition into further independent living, demonstrating clear progression and the effectiveness of the support model. The remaining young people continue to make steady and positive progress toward full independence.

To meet the assessed needs of our looked after children and young people our current commissioning data confirms that to help achieve sufficiency in terms of placement numbers and options we currently need a further medium to high supported accommodation provision. This takes into account the current 4-bed supported accommodation provision as above, that opened in November 2024 and the 5-bed provision that is scheduled to become operational during the next financial year.

## **2.3 Case for Change**

### **2.3.1 Spending and service objectives**

The Monmouth property development is designed to provide supported accommodation for care-experienced young people aged 16–24. This initiative aligns with the Council’s commitment to offer placements closer to home and supports the Welsh Government’s goal of eliminating profit from children’s social care. It addresses a critical gap in current provision by offering a safe, structured environment for young people with medium to high support needs as they transition to independence.

Young people leaving care often face significant challenges, including trauma, attachment difficulties, limited support networks, and risks such as exploitation or poor mental health. Without appropriate transitional support, these individuals are at risk of homelessness, tenancy breakdown, and poor life outcomes. This development provides a “stepping stone” for those who are not ready for full independence but have outgrown traditional care placements.

The primary goal of the service is to reduce young people’s support needs and prepare them for greater independence. It will provide medium to high levels of support, with staff available on-site 24/7. Many of these young people require enhanced, accommodation-based transitional support. The approach will be person-centred and outcome-focused, helping individuals develop the skills needed for independent living by age 18, or at least before 21. Support will include building resilience, problem-solving, practical life skills, budgeting, decision-making, pursuing education or employment, and strengthening social networks. It is not anticipated that young people with significant emotional dysregulation will be considered suitable for the provision.

### **2.3.2 Project Outcomes**

Successful delivery will:

- Offer a smaller homely provision for care-experienced young people aged 16–21 with medium to high support needs.
- Support those stepping down from residential or foster care who may otherwise be at risk of eviction or homelessness due to insufficient support.

- Increase the likelihood of successful tenancy and independence before age 18, or at least before 21.
- Enable smoother movement through the care system, freeing up placements for others who need them.

### **2.3.3 Service Model**

Accommodation-based support for young people over 16 does not fall under RISCA regulations and therefore does not require Care Inspectorate Wales registration. The support will be provided by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider via a thorough and robust tendering process.

### **2.3.4 Property Details**

Refurbishment of the property is required in order to provide safe and appropriate accommodation in accordance with statutory frameworks. Following refurbishment the property will have:

- 3 individual bedrooms for young people
- Communal areas to support social engagement and positive peer relationships including a large kitchen-diner and outdoor space.
- A staff bedroom/office for on-site support

The property is a well-presented modern four-bedroom family home located on a sought-after Wonastow estate on the west side of Monmouth, located near to the town centre, within walking distance of amenities and public transport, ensuring strong family and community connections.

The property stands in a good-sized corner plot measuring approximately 0.069 acres/282 m<sup>2</sup> and has a net internal area (including the garage) of 151 m<sup>2</sup> or 1625 ft<sup>2</sup>. Whilst surrounded by other properties, it has a relatively private rear garden. There is a single garage which has been converted in part into a fully insulated office with storage space to the front. The property has been upgraded throughout with high quality fixtures and fitting and benefits from a large open plan kitchen with dining space. The garden has been upgraded with a large composite decking area with lighting, raised beds and stone paving. There is an electric car charger and a double tandem driveway in front of the garage. The property has good energy efficiency which will help lower running costs, with an EPC rating of 85 B and potential for 94 A with improvements.

The property requires some refurbishment works to meet the relevant care standards such as a sprinkler system and additional fire measures such as improved detection. Children's Services have also identified the potential for a third ensuite to one of the first-floor bedrooms which would be beneficial. Given the property has a very good EPC, the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump is not considered essential or financially good value for money [if we choose to future proof and install on acquisition, an additional budget allowance of £30k would be needed]. Solar roof PV is also proposed to further improve the EPC and to support WG requirements. The property refurb works will be overseen by MCC Property Services.

### **2.3.5 Placement Approach**

Each placement will be carefully planned and matched to ensure compatibility between the young people. Whilst the aim is to create stability, the nature of the project is that young people will move on at different times and that the make-up of the household will change over time.

### **2.3.6 Business Case Objectives**

In summary, the primary objective of the Business Case is for up to 3 young people to be suitably matched and to be enabled to live comfortably and well in the property for as long as it meets their individual pathway planning needs.

The business case aims to achieve the following service improvements:

- Increase placements closer to home, meeting personal outcomes and care planning needs.
- Improve services for care-experienced young people by providing safe, supportive environments for skill development.
- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.
- Achieve better value for money and reduce revenue costs.
- Improve workforce efficiency and welfare through reduced travel.
- Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

### **2.3.7 Existing Arrangements**

All looked-after children have an allocated social worker and a care plan that outlines their individual outcomes. This includes:

- The reasons for entering care
- The primary purpose and objectives during their time in care
- Plans for maintaining and developing family and community relationships
- Educational arrangements
- A pathway plan for leaving care

Pathway planning begins at age 14 and sets out the support a young person will receive post-16 to prepare for independence. This process considers the skills needed for self-care, agreed personal outcomes, and goals related to accommodation, family connections, education, employment, and support levels. From age 15½, a Personal Advisor works alongside the social worker to support this planning. In some cases, pathway planning explores whether a return to family is safe and possible. Some young people aged 16 – 18 remain within a care environment either foster care or residential. However, for young people leaving a care setting the accommodation and support models available include:

Current Options for Care-Experienced Young People (16–21 years)

- **When I Am Ready Placements:** Allows a young person to remain in their foster placement beyond age 18, providing continuity. The foster carer becomes the landlord and receives payment from the Local Authority. Uptake is limited as it restricts carers’ ability to foster others.
- **Independent Living:** Young people take on their own tenancy, which may include local authority or housing association properties, private rentals, college/university accommodation, or shared housing.
- **Low-Level Supported Accommodation:** Currently, two provisions serve Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children aged 16+. These offer floating support Monday–Friday and access to an off-site house manager outside these hours. Locations include a 5-bed property in Newport and a 4-bed property in Cardiff.
- **Semi-Independent/Transitional Accommodation:** Supported hostels provide self-contained units with low to medium support for young people aged 16–24, including care leavers and those who are homeless. Three such provisions are available in Monmouthshire.
- **Supported Accommodation:** The Council currently operates one facility in Caldicot for five young people, offering 24-hour support in a homely setting. The aim is to help residents develop independent living skills and progress to lower-support or independent accommodation. If a young person is assessed as requiring supported accommodation, we are not able to place in-house, placements are spot purchased from the independent sector.

As at 27.11.2025 the authority had 73 children/ young people who are currently being accommodated in residential care homes or with foster carers who are 14 + (i.e. those who are already 16+ or who will be turning 16 in the next 2 years). Based on an understanding of their current care and support needs, many of these young people will require a step-down provision with medium to high support (such as the current project) to support them with their transition out of a care environment.

This table shows the placement types for the current 14 plus cohort of young people.

Placement Type	Children and Young People Placed in County	Children and Young People Placed Out of County	Total Number of Children and Young People
Monmouthshire Foster Carer	5	4	9
Independent Foster Carer	3	11	14
Monmouthshire Kinship Carer	15 (Includes PWP)	5 (Includes PWP)	20
Residential Care	5	5	10

Semi-independent/Transitional Accommodation (all 3rd party)	4	16	20
Total	32	41	73

Out of the above numbers 43 young people are already aged 16 or over.

These young people are currently being accommodated in various placements type.

12 young people in UASC accommodation provisions

8 young people in supported type accommodation provisions

4 young people in residential accommodation

4 young people accommodated by an IFA.

4 young people are with LA foster carers.

### 2.3.8 Business Needs

Where we are now	ESSENTIAL Objectives of Business Case
Monmouthshire currently has one medium to high supported accommodation placements and one in development.	To develop a further medium to high supported lodgings provision for up to 3 young people
Provider fees for young people in residential or IFA provisions are negotiated on an annual basis	To reduce dependency on external provision and external fee-setting [in the context where a national lack of placement sufficiency is driving costs]
Young people do not always have the opportunity to fully develop independent living skills in an appropriately supportive environment	To offer a stable, consistent environment, so that the young people can be encouraged to build their independent skills
Children are not placed near to their home and communities [being placed away from Monmouthshire leads to disrupted support and family relationships]	To increase opportunities to place children closer to their homes and communities allowing them to develop consistency and stability.

The Council is reliant on external placements to agree matching for children and there is little opportunity for forward care planning across the cohort of children who are looked after	To increase the ability to forward plan and have greater control on matching, placement decisions and oversight on support.
Social care workers and personal assistants are required to travel to different parts of the country to visit individual children	To reduce the amount of travel time for the social care workforce
Children are placed in a range of different organisations which do not support fully integrated working.	To increase opportunities for integrated working to ensure good outcomes for children

### 2.3.9 Additional Benefits

This business case presents an opportunity for the Council to acquire and redevelop a three -bedroom supported living accommodation utilising full grant funding. This will allow for sustainable improvements to be made to the property and its outside space including energy efficiency. As part of the refurbishment, we will be exploring how to increase the energy efficiency of the property with the aspirational A rating in mind. We will be considering installation of solar panels to the roof and an upgrade to the current central heating system to air source heat pumps.

The business case is in-keeping with the objectives of the Welsh Government and the Housing with Care Fund Capital programme. The grant application for the purchase of the property was approved by Welsh Government on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 26 subject to Ministerial sign off.

The risks for this proposal fall into two main areas – property related risks and implementation risks.

### 2.4.1 Property Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Unknown/excessive project costs.	Property Services have a good understanding of the schedule of works required and will seek competitive quotations.  Considered low risk due to the quality / age of the property.
Availability and capacity of suitable building contractor.	The relatively low scale of the works required should enable us to procure a contractor with the capacity to carry out the work within the required timescale.

<p>Time delays in project completion due to unforeseen circumstances, project scheduling, changes in scope, or external factors beyond the project team’s control.</p>	<p>We will develop a partnership approach and undertake project monitoring through each stage from inception and planning to completion of works.</p>
<p>Property Title is assumed clean, free of any restrictions or encumbrances. Assumed property is registered with H M Land Registry as freehold with title absolute.</p> <p>Condition of Property not fully known.</p> <p>Services - Detailed investigations of the property’s services have not been carried out/not known.</p> <p>Planning – Existing use is C3 dwelling houses.</p> <p>Contamination and Hazardous Substances (i.e. Asbestos)</p>	<p>Legal due diligence to be carried out as condition of purchase.</p> <p>The property is approximately 8-10 years old and has been upgraded throughout with high quality fixtures and fittings. Property Services inspect the property to assess its general condition/structural and structural condition.</p> <p>The property is connected to mains services including electricity, gas, water, and drainage. There is no change proposed to the existing services other than an additional ensuite which would require drainage works. The need for any survey work to be assessed by Property Services and carried out accordingly by a reputable contractor.</p> <p>It is assumed that all services and associated controls are in working order and free from defect.</p> <p>A Certificate of Lawful Use is to be obtained confirming proposed use is permitted development with change to C3(b). Condition of purchase.</p> <p>A full R&amp;D survey will be carried out if deemed necessary prior to any refurb works commencing. Due to the age of the property the presence of any asbestos is highly unlikely. The property was built post 1999 when asbestos in housing was banned.</p>

<p>Building Regulations risks</p>	<p>Any works carried out by the vendors to the property that may be subject to Building Regulations will be checked/requested prior to purchase and as per normal conveyancing practice. For example, the garage conversion would require Building Regs and we would expect to receive a completion certificate.</p>
<p>Market Acquisition – Risk of paying more than market value as asking price not tested on open market.</p>	<p>Condition of grant funding is the approval of an RICS Red Book Market Valuation to ensure the acquisition price is not inflated. This is also a condition of purchase.</p> <p>Any offer made over the market value is a consideration for MCC as any additional cost will fall to Children’s Services.</p>

**2.4.2 Implementation Risks**

<p><b>Risk</b></p>	<p><b>Mitigation</b></p>
<p>Unable to secure a service provider</p>	<p>The Council will be using an Open Procurement Route via Sell2Wales.</p> <p>Previous similar procurement processes were successful.</p>
<p>Delays / inability to identify and match suitable young people who need the supported accommodation provision</p>	<p>The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual young people and how they might match.</p> <p>Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children / young people who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home.</p>
<p>Refurbishing costs exceed what is currently provided for.</p>	<p>There is a contingency for unexpected works in the costs and a process for additional grant funding application via the Notification of Event (NoE) process.</p>
<p>Unsuccessful grant application leading to MCC meeting cost of refurbishment.</p>	<p>The grant application has been approved and is at final stage (ministerial approval).</p>

	The costs of drawing down on borrowing have been factored into the business case.
Delays in approving the property acquisition will result in identified property being acquired by other buyers.	Maintain strong communication with agents and vendors.

### 2.4.2 Constraints

There will be a ten-year restriction on title in favour of Welsh Government as per the conditions on the grant funding. In addition, the property is utilised for the use stipulated in the application for a period of ten years. Following this period, the property can be repurposed if required, in line with strategic priorities at that time. Failure to meet grant funding conditions can result in claw back of funds.

### 2.4.5 Dependencies

Operational delivery is dependent on approval of a suitable provider via the authority’s procurement framework.

## 3. OPTIONS ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Critical Success Factors

- Completion of the purchase prior to 31st March 2026.
- The property is acquired and refurbished to a high standard.
- A capital grant is received to reduce any borrowing strain on the Council.
- A service provider is successfully appointed and a contract and monitoring arrangements are in place.
- The first cohort of young peoples are successfully matched and in-situ.
- Young people achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new scheme.
- Young people are supported to move on to living independently.

### 3.2 Main Options

OPTION 1	Do Nothing
<b>Description</b>	The Local Authority does not develop any further in-house supported accommodation placements and continues to spot-purchase from the external market
<b>Net Costs</b>	£0 however, the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against a current spend of £446,000 per annum based on an illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased provision.

<b>Advantages</b>	The Council will avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified above.
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Leaves the Council dependent on the external market to provide supported accommodation placements for young people. Council would lose the potential to benefit from a capital grant funding.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Not recommended
<b>OPTION 2</b>	<b>Do Minimal</b>
<b>Description</b>	Do not proceed with the acquisition and refurbishment of this property and seek alternatives.
<b>Net Costs</b>	£0 however, the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against the current spend of £446,000 per annum based on illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased provision.
<b>Advantages</b>	The council would not utilise its current borrowing headroom, which would then be retained for an alternative, potentially more suitable / less costly property.
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Suitable properties for development do not come onto the market frequently.  Delay in pursuing a suitable property such as this would delay the opportunity to develop a residential provision by an indefinite, potentially extended, period.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Not recommended
<b>OPTION 3</b>	<b>Purchase and redevelopment of the property with 3rd party service delivery</b>
<b>Description</b>	The Local Authority proceeds with the acquisition and development of the property and seeks to commission a suitable partner to provide the support
<b>Net Costs</b>	Based on similar models, the weekly anticipated cost for an external provider would be £1,652.56 per week per bed, equating to an annual revenue cost of £257,799.36. Based on a 100% occupancy for a full year, this represents a potential saving of £178,201 per annum taking into account property maintenance costs (without any capital repayments).
<b>Advantages</b>	This option would mean that the delivery and implementation risks are shared with another organisation who are experienced in the delivery of post 16 housing-based support and will enable us to appropriately match children based on the level of support required.
<b>Disadvantages</b>	A partnership arrangement would reduce the level of autonomy that the council has in terms of care planning and matching.

<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
<b>OPTION 4</b>	<b>Purchase and Re-develop the property and provide the support in-house</b>
<b>Description</b>	Proceed with the acquisition and refurbishment and look to provide the support element in-house
<b>Net Costs</b>	As per Option 3
<b>Advantages</b>	Children’s services would retain full autonomy and decisions about the provision would be made entirely by the service. There would be no requirement to procure a service or for contract monitoring. The service would be required to build an inhouse workforce which could be scaled up if required. This fully supports the wider strategic aims of the council in terms of developing in-house / regional sufficiency.
<b>Disadvantages</b>	This would not support our strategy to maintain a mixed service delivery model in order to build-in resilience and choice. There is strong experience and expertise within the sector providing accommodation-based support. Given this, we have prioritised recruitment for our residential children’s home provision as it is less likely that we could successfully procure a residential workforce via a not-for-profit organisation.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Not recommended

#### 4. **PROCUREMENT ROUTE**

Acquisition of property will be through the open market with a private buyer.

Works for the refurbishment will be procured through normal council arrangements utilising framework contractors.

A robust and thorough procurement process will be carried out for the commissioning of the support provider, in partnership with our internal commissioning team.

#### 5. **FUNDING AND AFFORDABILITY**

##### Capital Costs of Acquisition and Refurbishment

The Local Authority has applied to Welsh Government for a £675,450 HCF capital grant to purchase and redevelop the property via the HCF 2025/26 funding stream. The purchase in 2025/26 funding stream and refurbishment works 2026/27 funding stream. This would provide a 100% grant funded resource for the development of provision. The grant application is at final stage (ministerial approval).

We require access to the capital borrowing headroom pending the HCF grant application being approved to avoid any delays in the purchase (bearing in mind that the conditions of the grant are that the acquisition is made before the end of this financial year); or in the event that unlikely event that the grant is not approved.

In light of the above we have modelled both scenarios i) that the capital scheme is fully funded via a grant and ii) that the capital element is met through prudential borrowing.

The revenue costs of prudential borrowing are already factored into the Council's medium term treasury budgets and therefore there are no consequential borrowing cost implications on the Children's services budget. However, for transparency and to aid in a meaningful like-for-like comparison between the existing model of service delivery and this proposal, an indicative annual borrowing cost has been included within the business case calculation.

#### Annual Revenue Costs

To develop a prospective business case we have used a mid-point unit cost of children who are currently placed in external residential or foster placements. For 3 children this represents £446,000 per annum spend against the placement budget.

Whilst we have a cohort of children who would potentially benefit from a move to the provision, the dynamic nature of our detailed care-planning makes it unfeasible to accurately pin-down the exact 3 young people identified until nearer completion. Using the mid-point average cost of placements associated with these children currently provides a reasonably accurate illustration of the cost envelope.

#### Provider costs

Based on similar models, the weekly anticipated cost for an external provider would be £1,652.56 per week per bed, equating to an annual revenue cost of £257,799,36.

The cost of commissioning the support element of the scheme has been calculated based on an equivalent service model in our Caldicot property (i.e. Local Authority owned property with a 3rd party contract to provide the care).

Taking into account the varying cost impact of the 2 potential borrowing scenarios as above, we have modelled the revenue costs against a 100% occupancy rate and an 80% occupancy rate. These tables are illustrative because the identified savings / or the impact on savings arising from a void cannot be easily identified due to the variability of existing package of care. Equally, there may be situations where placements result in cost avoidance. This potential saving will contribute to the overall £1m Children's Services practice change mandate for 2026/27. As the project is scheduled to come online until part way through the 2026/27 year, the full annual savings potential will be realised during 2027/28.

80% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the provision.

Based on 100% occupancy

<b>Annual Revenue Costs</b>	<b>Based on successful HCF application</b> £	<b>Based on borrowing to complete the development</b> £
<b>Service Provider Contract</b>	257,799.36	257,799.36
<b>General Maintenance</b>	10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 29/01/26</b>	0	82,288.00
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS</b>	267,799.36	350,087.36
<b>ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS</b>	£446,000	£446,000
<b>Based on 100% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS</b>	178,201	95,913

Based on 80% occupancy

<b>Annual Revenue Costs</b>	<b>Based on successful HCF application</b> £	<b>Based on borrowing to complete the development</b> £
<b>Service Provider Contract</b>	257,799.36	257,799.36
<b>General Maintenance</b>	10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 29/01/26</b>	0	82,288.00
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS</b>	267,799.36	350,087.36

<b>ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS</b>	446,000	446,000
<b>Based on 80% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS</b>	142,561	76,731

### Management of voids

If voids arise, and there are no young people identified within Monmouthshire who would need the placement in the foreseeable future, there is potential to offer the placement to another Local Authority with a slight mark-up to the weekly cost.

## 6. DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

### Key milestones and indicative timelines

- Complete property purchase by 31 March 2026
- Framework Contractors Mini Tender April 2026
- Appoint Contractor May 2026
- Commencement of Works June 2026
- Completion of Works August 2025
- Provision becomes operational September 2026

Task	Persons Responsible	Time frame	Reports to
Purchase of Abergavenny Property	Nicholas Keyse	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	Peter Davies
Project management for refurbishment and improvement	Property services Nicholas Perry	April 2026 onwards	Nicholas Keyse
Service specification and procurement process with Service Provider	Scott Hereford Craig Williams	April 2026 – September	Diane Corrister
Appoint Service provider	Craig Williams	September 2026	Jane Rodgers Diane Corrister
Care planning and transition arrangements	Lupupa Nshimbi Scott Hereford	July 2026 onwards	Diane Corrister

for young people who are identified as suitable to be placed in the new provision			
On-going contract monitoring	Craig Williams	Quarterly from April 2026	Jane Rodges Diane Corrister
Oversight of Children placed in Property	Lupupa Nshimbi	April 2026 onwards	Diane Corrister

Contingency Plan

The need for a contingency might arise if it becomes clear that the redevelopment of the property won't be achieved, a suitable provider cannot be commissioned or no suitable young people are identified to move in.

In this case contingency options will be considered follows:

- The council will review the specification and re-tender for either the works or the support element.
- The council will look at the option of developing the support element in-house
- The council will seek to sell individual residential placements to neighbouring Local Authorities.
- The council will liaise with the regional partnership board to seek a change of use for the property in keeping with the objectives of the council and the overall objectives of the capital programme (to avoid claw back).
- The property could be re-purposed for several different uses; a business case and options appraisal would be undertaken.



# Integrated Impact Assessment document

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

<p><b>Name of the Officer</b> Jane Rodgers Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding &amp; Health</p> <p><b>Phone no:</b> <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk">janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</b></p> <p>This impact assessment will look at the impact of the redevelopment of a 3-bedroom supported accommodation provision in Monmouth.</p>
<p><b>Name of Service area</b></p> <p>Social Care and Health Directorate, Children's Services</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>26/01/2026</p>

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**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	This development will positively impact our young people, specifically those who are looked after, by ensuring that they have increased opportunities to get the support they need closer to their homes and communities.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Disability	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

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?
Gender reassignment	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Marriage or civil partnership	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Pregnancy or maternity	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Race	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Religion or Belief	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Sex	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

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?
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

## 2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

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**

The business case seeks to increase the sufficiency of appropriate placements closer to home for care experienced children and supports the repatriation of Monmouthshire children back into the county. The provision will enable care experienced young people to develop their life skills and support their pathway to independence so that their future life chances and economic mobility are improved. The provision is designed for care experienced young people who have medium to high support needs, which is currently a gap in provision. This additional stepping stone approach will help vulnerable young people sustain future stable accommodation and tenancies.

Bringing young people closer to their families and support networks will ensure there are reduced socio-economic barriers for parents and guardians to engage with their children.

The development of accommodation close to community resources will reduce the economic impact on the young people when accessing EET, with transport infrastructure becoming more accessible.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on people who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Placement of young people closer to home and communities to improve social and economic mobility where appropriate. Ensuring the project is close to schools, employment opportunities, youth and health services to enhance the opportunities for supporting our young people to achieve their personal wellbeing outcomes and become more independent.

## Policy making and the Welsh language.

<b>How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:</b>	<b>Describe the positive impacts of this proposal</b>	<b>Describe the negative impacts of this proposal</b>	<b>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts</b>
<b>Policy Making</b>  Effects on the use of the Welsh language,  Promoting Welsh language  Treating the Welsh language no less favorably	The proposals will be neutral in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language and will not treat the Welsh language less favorably than the English language. The proposal will ensure young people remain in Wales and enable them to maintain connections to the Welsh language.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	All supporting documents, information and surveys are available in Welsh upon request
<b>Operational</b>  Recruitment & Training of workforce	All adverts and tender specifications will be available in Welsh and will be advertised via the Sell2Wales procurement website.  We are not currently implementing an authority led operational delivery team, therefore there will be no formal recruitment linked to this project.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Any future recruitment will be undertaken through the medium of English and Welsh and all documents displayed bilingually on the council website and social media channels.  Applicants will be invited to apply in Welsh if that is their preference.
<b>Service delivery</b>  Use of Welsh language in service delivery  Promoting use of the language	Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home, this will be stipulated with the service provider at award of contract.  Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Development of bilingual policies and procedures to be available on request.

	All policies and procedures implemented within the home will be available in Welsh on request.		
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**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!

<b>Well-Being Goal</b>	<b>Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.</b>	<b>What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
<p><b>A prosperous Wales</b> Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>Utilising local property related services and local contractors in the refurbishment of the home boosting local economy.</p> <p>This proposal will also provide new jobs for supported accommodation staff.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>
<p><b>A resilient Wales</b> Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>We aim to increase the properties EPC rating to A, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring sustainability is at the heart of the development. Examples include the installation of an air source heat pump and solar panels.</p> <p>Close proximity to public transport links will reduce the reliance on private transport, reducing the carbon footprint.</p> <p>We intend to install planting areas in the garden to encourage sustainability and support biodiversity. Young</p>	<p>Using framework contractors who are compliant with environmental legislation in relation to materials and the disposal of waste</p>

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?
	people will be encouraged to develop their environmental awareness.	
<p><b>A healthier Wales</b> People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Children and young people will be living in their communities and close to support networks, thus improving their sense of identity and general wellbeing.</p> <p>The support provider will ensure the mental and physical health of the young people is monitored and supported where necessary, encouraging them to be active and eat well will be at the heart of this.</p> <p>Young people will be supported to engage with activities which increase self-esteem and confidence, leading to better mental health and sense of purpose.</p>	<p>The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, who have access to local services and maintaining links to their family and community. Bringing our children looked after back to Monmouthshire will mean we can work more closely with our local partner's where good relationships have already been built to ensure that the young person has the best access to services and their physical, emotional and mental needs are being met.</p>
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b> Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>Our young people will be able to connect with their local community and benefit from the excellent community support on offer. They will be supported to positively engage in their community and contribute where they can, to promote cohesive community links.</p> <p>This can be achieved by engaging with education, employment and training, joining community clubs and groups and taking pride in where they live.</p>	<p>Bringing our young people closer to home to maintain connections with families, communities, and school placements. As they grow and develop into adulthood, there is a greater possibility that they will remain in Monmouthshire as adults.</p> <p>Close collaboration with neighbourhood groups, police and community groups will ensure we maintain cohesive and positive relationships and address any concerns in a proactive and empathetic manner.</p>
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b> Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local</p>	<p>Living inside of Monmouthshire and Wales will enable our young people to take ownership for their future and contribute to the development of Wales.</p>	<p>This proposal will keep young people in county and in country. It will promote links to families and communities.</p>

<b>Well-Being Goal</b>	<b>Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.</b>	<b>What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
social, economic and environmental wellbeing	By purchasing a modern nearly new property ensures we are minimising the requirement for new materials and reducing the carbon footprint associated with their production and transportation	
<b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b> Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Children and young people are enabled to live and grow in communities which represent their own language and culture. Use of the Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be encouraged by the service provider.	Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home.  Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.
<b>A more equal Wales</b> People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	The creation of this provision will provide the young people with a supportive environment which will provide the young people the skills that are required to step down into supported accommodation with a lower intensity of support and ultimately into independent accommodation provision. This provision will provide stability and structure for the children and ensure their life experiences do not inhibit their development and progression.	Regular reviewing of progress linked to mutually agreed targets with the young people. These will relate to developing their skills, knowledge and qualities with the intention of becoming self-sufficient and responsible adults.

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>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>Significant emphasis has and will continue to be placed on the long-term care and pathway planning and reviewing arrangements for these children and young people. Utilising the momentum of the Welsh Government manifesto pledge to 'eliminate' profit from children's social care.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>During the redevelopment process we have and will continue to engage with a number of local contractors to deliver the desired objectives.</p> <p>Collaboration with the service provider will be fundamental to the success of the home. This will be an on-going and tightly monitored relationship.</p> <p>In addition, collaboration with the Gwent regional partnership board will be a key collaboration in coordinating the HCF funding grant/application.</p>	<p>None identified</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><b>Involvement</b></p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>The transitional arrangements for these young people will be managed in detail. Key internal stakeholders have been engaged in the design and inception of the provision including property and planning colleagues. All council governance has been adhered to, to ensure all members are briefed on proposals. Specific Ward Members will be consulted further and kept abreast of all developments.</p> <p><i>Who are the stakeholders who will be affected by your proposal? Have they been involved? Do those people reflect the diversity of the area which is served?</i></p>	<p>Continued dialogue with children, home visits, managed transitions into education, training and employment</p> <p>Public engagement events with neighbours and community groups to ensure a harmonious and positive inception to the project and continued local support.</p>
 <p><b>Prevention</b></p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Children Services works to the earliest possible intervention, preventing problems occurring or getting worse. The proposal helps prepare young people to enter into permanent housing solutions. Where appropriate in-house placement can act as a stepping stone to support a child or young-person to leave care in a planned way.</p> <p>A 24 hour support provision will provide the daily support for the young people. Ensuring their needs are met on a proactive basis, identifying any issues as they arise, preventing escalation and incident.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>
 <p><b>Integration</b></p> <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>The proposal allows children and young people to become integrated into the local community, they will be encouraged to engage in community activities such as Mon life and Mon Sport. They will have access to local education, employment and training as well as statutory healthcare facilities. These measure will ensure they are integrated into the community.</p>	<p>None identified at this point</p>

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

	<b>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has</b>	<b>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has</b>	<b>What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
Safeguarding	Safeguarding will be at the heart of developing this provision for our young people. The home will be quality assured via the service provider's governance arrangements, will be subject to review and scrutiny from Childrens Services and will have detailed safeguarding arrangements in place.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact to safeguarding.	None identified at this point
Corporate Parenting	By developing this supported accommodation provision we are enhancing the council's corporate parenting role by providing a local authority scheme specifically for our young people. This will enable improved care experiences for young people and will allow good oversight of the individualised support that is provided.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact on corporate parenting.	None identified at this point

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

Commissioning Data

As at 27.11.2025 the authority had 73 children/ young people who are currently being accommodated in residential care homes or with foster carers who are 14 + (i.e. those who are already 16+ or who will be turning 16 in the next 2 years). Based on an understanding of their current care and support needs, many of these young people will require a step-down provision with medium to high support (such as the current project) to support them with their transition out of a care environment.

This table shows the placement types for the current 14 plus cohort of young people.

Placement Type	Children and Young People Placed in County	Children and Young People Placed Out of County	Total Number of Children and Young People
Monmouthshire Foster Carer	5	4	9
Independent Foster Carer	3	11	14
Monmouthshire Kinship Carer	15 (Includes PWP)	5 (Includes PWP)	20
Residential Care	5	5	10
Semi-independent/Transitional Accommodation (all 3rd party)	4	16	20
Total	32	41	73

Out of the above numbers 43 young people are already aged 16 or over.

These young people are currently being accommodated in various placements type.

12 young people in UASC accommodation provisions

8 young people in supported type accommodation provisions

4 young people in residential accommodation

4 young people accommodated by an IFA.

4 young people are with LA foster carers.

Out of the above numbers above, 43 young people are already aged 16 or over.

Financial Data - including the costs associated with a representative group of young people; revenue costs of running the scheme and borrowing costs to undertake the proposed renovations to the property. This has allowed us to undertake financial modelling on both 100% and 80% occupancy levels.

**6. 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?**

*This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template*

Positives

Our project proposes to repatriate Monmouthshire children. Bringing our children back into our communities where they can access local education, employment opportunities and youth services that will support their social development and increase their social and economic mobility.

The ability to create a bespoke provision that meets the needs of the young people, moving them forward in their development in a supportive environment, until they are ready to transition into more independent accommodation.

Safeguarding for our young people will be improved with increased oversight of the support being delivered. MCC will have the opportunity to have full design of the support delivery specification.

Bringing young people closer to their families and support networks will see reduced socio-economic barriers.

This proposal will represent a financial saving, with the redistribution of revenue currently being spent in the private sector and out of county being redirected to our service. This proposal will also provide new jobs in the community with the procurement of a service provider to manage the home.

The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, having greater access to local services and maintaining links to their family and community.

Negatives

Preparation is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is present and encouraged within the home. Welsh language and culture development may be needed for both young people and staff.

Community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward as this may represent a barrier if not managed correctly and communities are not well informed.

**7. 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
Present the business case at Cabinet	11 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2026	<b>Jane Rodgers</b>
Engage with ward member and local community	Feb 2026	<b>Jane Rodgers</b>

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**8. 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.**

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
<b>1</b>	Cabinet	<b>11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026</b>	



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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>2026/27 PLACEMAKING DELIVERY</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>11 FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ABERGAVENNY, CALDICOT, CHEPSTOW, MAGOR WITH UNDY, MONMOUTH, USK</b>

## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1. This report sets out the recommendations of the local placemaking partnership groups in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor with Undy, Monmouth and Usk for project delivery in 2026/27 using Welsh Government Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride in Place Impact Fund allocations, and seeks Cabinet's agreement to those recommendations.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1. That Cabinet agrees the proposed schedule of projects for delivery using Welsh Government Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride in Place Impact Fund allocations for 2026/27, in line with the recommendations of the local placemaking partnership groups in the six towns, and authorises the Chief Officer, Place & Community Wellbeing, to prioritise and adjust the programme as needed in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and with the relevant local placemaking partnership groups.

## 3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1. Placemaking plans or equivalent documents are now in place to guide town centre placemaking and regeneration activity in all six towns in the county. Placemaking plans for Abergavenny, Magor with Undy and Monmouth were approved and adopted in December 2025. The Transforming Chepstow Masterplan was adopted in 2023, and the Usk and Woodside Improvement Masterplan in 2022. The Caldicot Town Centre Regeneration Framework was completed in 2018 and a replacement placemaking plan will be developed in 2026.
- 3.2. Local placemaking partnership groups known as placemaking steering or delivery groups have been established in each of the six towns to oversee the development and implementation of placemaking plans and equivalent documents. These groups include

elected members from the town and county councils and are each chaired by a representative from the town council.

- 3.3. As previously reported to Cabinet, £700,000 of Welsh Government Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant capital funding has been allocated to the county council for 2026/27 to support the delivery regeneration and placemaking projects in town centres.
- 3.4. In addition Monmouthshire has been awarded £1.5m capital funding from the UK Government's Pride In Place Impact Fund for 2025/26 and 2026/27. The funding can be spent in either year; given timescales it is expected that the great majority will be spent in 2026/27. The purpose of this funding is closely aligned with the placemaking agenda which has guided the development and delivery of placemaking plans in Monmouthshire. The three objectives of the Pride in Place Impact Fund are as follows:
  - a. Community spaces: creating, extending, improving or refurbishing existing community facilities and enabling community organisations to take control or ownership of underused but valued local assets.
  - b. Public spaces: enhancing the physical environment in public spaces - examples of initiatives include new or improved green spaces or public squares, improved outdoor play, sports and leisure spaces, installing street furniture, public art or wayfinding.
  - c. High street and town centre revitalisation: making these areas more attractive and welcoming places where people congregate and which encourage economic activity. Examples of initiatives that could be funded are shop frontage improvements, adaptations that bring premises back into use, streetscape improvements, public art, trails and wayfinding, and creating or improving the infrastructure for regular markets.
- 3.5. The Council is required to provide to UK Government a spend forecast for each of the three objectives by 18 February 2026.
- 3.6. Welsh Government Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride In Place Impact Fund allocations therefore provide a combined total of £2.2m which can be used to support the delivery of regeneration and placemaking projects in town centres in 2026/27, in line with the priorities set out in placemaking plans and equivalent documents and identified by local placemaking partnership groups.
- 3.7. Local placemaking partnership groups were invited to identify their priorities for delivery using this funding, in alignment with the placemaking plans and locally agreed placemaking priorities. Officers have facilitated a series of local meetings in December 2025 and January 2026 for these groups to consider and agree their recommendations for delivery priorities.
- 3.8. The table below sets out these recommendations, which are proposed as the basis for placemaking delivery in 2026/27 across the six towns.

<b>Proposed project/town</b>	<b>Funding allocation</b>	<b>Description/comments</b>
<b>ABERGAVENTNY</b>		
Changing places/public toilets/Shopmobility/cycle hub	£350,000	On site of existing public toilets and Shopmobility facility in Castle Street car park.
<b>Subtotal Abergavenny</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	
<b>CALDICOT</b>		
Town centre public realm - quick wins	£100,000	Quick wins in advance of longer term public realm improvements - eg lighting, seating, planting, pocket park, play opportunities
Caldicot skatepark	£150,000	Funding contribution to delivery of replacement skatepark next to leisure centre.
CAB building improvements	£50,000	External/internal refurbishment and decarbonisation measures to MCC building at The Cross leased to CAB.
<b>Subtotal Caldicot</b>	<b>£300,000</b>	
<b>CHEPSTOW</b>		
18 High Street	£100,000	Funding contribution for refurbishment/conversion of large vacant shop on Chepstow High Street. Part of larger project which will also deliver 10 one bed flats on first floor.
TIC toilets	£80,000	Refurbishment of TIC toilets.
Thornwell allotments	£60,000	Creation of new allotment site in Thornwell.
Bulwark shopfront improvements	£60,000	Funding contribution for façade improvements to 50-58 Bulwark Road.
<b>Subtotal Chepstow</b>	<b>£300,000</b>	
<b>MAGOR WITH UNDY</b>		
B4245 western gateway – phase 1/quick wins	£100,000	Phase one of public realm improvements to key gateways to village centre from B4245. Planting, seating, public art, wayfinding.
B4245 eastern gateway – phase 1/quick wins	£20,000	
Magor Square public realm - quick wins	£100,000	Phase one of public realm improvements to Magor Square, including walking and cycling measures.
Village centre – walking and cycling	£25,000	
Neighbourhood routes from residential areas	£20,000	Wayfinding and other improvements to key walking and cycling routes into village centre
<b>Subtotal Magor With Undy</b>	<b>£265,000</b>	
<b>MONMOUTH</b>		
Monmouth bus station	£180,000	Public realm improvements at key public transport gateway.
Wayfinding strategy and implementation	£100,000	Scoping, design and phase 1 implementation of wayfinding measures.
Town centre property improvement grants	£200,000	Grant scheme to bring empty property back into use, improve buildings in poor condition. Potential to include flood resilience measures where appropriate.

Smart towns	£20,000	Sensors and supporting infrastructure for footfall counting, car park usage, air quality etc.
<b>Subtotal Monmouth</b>	<b>£500,000</b>	
<b>USK</b>		
Changing Places/public toilets	£250,000	On site of existing public toilets in Maryport Street North car park
<b>Subtotal Usk</b>	<b>£250,000</b>	
<b>ALL TOWNS PROJECTS</b>		
Town centre property improvement grants	£235,000	Grant scheme to bring empty property back into use, improve buildings in poor condition. In addition to Monmouth-specific allocation
<b>Subtotal All Towns Projects</b>	<b>£235,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL ALL TOWNS</b>	<b>£2,200,000</b>	

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

4.1. An Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating equalities, future generations, Welsh language and socio-economic duty) is attached at Appendix 1.

4.2 The main impacts of the proposals identified in this impact assessment are:

- Potential positive impacts on the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy/maternity and sex.
- Potential positive impacts in relation to socio-economic duty arising from investment in town centres and benefits this may bring in particular to people in poverty.
- Positive impacts on all the well-being goals.
- The development of the proposal meets the sustainable development principles.
- No impact on safeguarding or corporate parenting.

#### 5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1. An options appraisal is provided in the table below.

Options	Benefits	Risks
Do nothing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No demand on MCC resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or no delivery in 2026/27 against placemaking objectives.</li> <li>• Welsh Government Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride in Place</li> </ul>

		Impact Fund allocations would not be used, reducing resources available to the Council and potential prejudicing future funding awards.
Develop an alternative programme for delivery using the allocated funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for further consideration of potential projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undermines role of local placemaking partnership groups in agreeing local priorities.</li> <li>Will cause delay in delivery, leading to risk that full grant funding cannot be used.</li> <li>Programme may not align with local needs/priorities identified in placemaking plans and by local placemaking steering/delivery groups.</li> </ul>
Agree the schedule of projects as recommended here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows delivery to begin rapidly, maximising potential to use full grant funding allocated</li> <li>Schedule of projects reflects recommendations of local placemaking partnership groups, and responds to local needs/priorities identified in placemaking plans</li> <li>Schedule of projects builds on delivery in previous years, providing assurance on deliverability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of the projects have funding and delivery risks which will require further mitigation as the projects are developed.</li> </ul>

## 6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1. The projects proposed for delivery in this report are derived from or aligned with placemaking plans or equivalent documents for the six towns. The individual placemaking plans set out evaluation criteria by which the impact of the plans and of their proposed projects and activities can be assessed. These vary between the towns depending on the objectives agreed for each plan.
- 6.2. Further evaluation criteria will be identified for individual projects recommended here as they are brought forward for development and delivery.

## 7. REASONS:

- 7.1. The decision is required to allow Welsh Government Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride In Place Impact Fund funding allocated to Monmouthshire for to be used to support the delivery of regeneration and placemaking projects in town centres in the county in 2026/27 in line with the recommendations of the six local placemaking partnership groups.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 8.1. The table under paragraph 3.8 sets out the proposed funding allocations for projects from Welsh Government Placemaking Grant and UK Government Pride in Place Impact Fund for 2026/27. In some cases the individual projects will require additional funding. Decisions on any additional funding will be brought forward as appropriate.
- 8.2. Programme management and project delivery capacity will be provided by existing staff within the Regeneration team, working with delivery partners both within the Council and externally as appropriate for individual projects and supplemented as necessary by additional project management capacity funded from the individual project allocations.

## **9. CONSULTEES:**

- 9.1. The proposed schedule of projects is based on the recommendations of the local placemaking partnership groups in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor with Undy, Monmouth and Usk. These groups include elected members from the town and county councils and are each chaired by a representative from the town council.
- 9.2. The projects proposed for delivery in this report are derived from or aligned with placemaking plans or equivalent documents for the six towns. These plans were each the subject of extensive consultation and engagement.
- 9.3. Catherine Fookes MP and Peter Fox MS have also been consulted on the proposed projects.
- 9.4. In addition Cabinet and SLT have been consulted on the proposals.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- 10.1. The proposed projects are derived from or aligned with the following plans:
- Abergavenny Placemaking Plan
  - Caldicot Town Centre Regeneration Strategy
  - Transforming Chepstow Masterplan
  - Magor with Undy Placemaking Plan
  - Monmouth Placemaking Plan
  - Usk & Woodside Improvement Masterplan

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