

SUBJECT: Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy action plan progress update
MEETING: Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 3rd December 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an update on the Council's Economy, Employment and Skills (EES) Strategy Action Plan Progress Update, enabling scrutiny of progress against the objectives set out in the strategy approved by Cabinet on 7 February 2024 (Appendix One).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee scrutinises the delivery of the objectives set out in the EES Strategy (Appendix One) and the areas for development for 25/26.
- 2.2 That the committee acknowledge that a range of approved and developing strategies now cover key objectives within the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy (EES), adopted in February 2024, and that progress will continue to be monitored through these with key updates reflected in the EES Strategy Action Plan where relevant.
- Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy
 - Asset Management Strategy
 - Local Area Energy Plan
 - NEET Prevention Strategy
 - Local Food Strategy
 - Local Transport Strategy
 - Destination Management Plan (currently in development)

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background information

- 3.1.1 Monmouthshire has a high value, highly skilled, diverse, and resilient economy, working to its full capacity, attracting investment to support its strong entrepreneurial culture.
- 3.1.2 In the UK Competitiveness Index 2023, Monmouthshire retained its position as the second most competitive economy in Wales after the capital city of Cardiff and has improved its UK ranking since 2019. This reflects the comparatively high earnings achieved in the Monmouthshire economy.
- 3.1.3 Our economy has clear potential to be a key contributor to future economic growth of the Cardiff Capital Region and Wales as a whole. Its relative economic strength will be critical in boosting the wider and adjoining areas and border regions, contributing to the strategic policy ambitions described earlier

- 3.1.4 Monmouthshire is a border county in a strategic location, a “Gateway to Wales”. Our county benefits from its involvement in regional economic partnerships including the Cardiff Capital Region/Corporate Joint Committee and Marches Forward. Participation in these partnerships enable us to exploit areas of mutual benefit and added value, increase investment prospects, showcase best practice by building strong networks and identify opportunities to share services where it is cost effective.

Progress to date

- 3.2.1 The Economy, Employment and Skills (EES) Strategy and Action Plan was [approved by Cabinet on 7th February 2024](#). It addresses the challenges and opportunities for sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Monmouthshire. The responsibility of this strategy is a shared one, involving a range of directorates within Monmouthshire County Council.
- 3.2.2 Our Corporate and Community Plan recognises that Monmouthshire has a strong diverse economy and is well placed for growth, employment rates are high as are qualification levels but there is more that can be done. Monmouthshire can be more vibrant and the conditions exist to achieve this. The EES Strategy vision is *‘To foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity.’* This is set out through four key priority themes: -Place, People, Enterprise, and Infrastructure and a number of objectives which, have informed the action plan. These are detailed in the tables below:

Place: A Vibrant, greener Monmouthshire

- Promote the distinctive diversity of Monmouthshire as a county of opportunity
- Support the vitality of our town centres
- Support the transition towards net zero and protect our environment
- Support rural diversification
- Enhance the experience for visitors and deliver sustainable growth in our tourism economy

People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire

- Support a balanced change in the demographic profile of our county.
- Support the creation of up to 6,240 sustainable job opportunities.
- Equip people with skills and qualifications to enter employment, enable employment progression, and explore a Skills Centre in Monmouthshire
- Collaborate with comprehensive schools, further and higher education partners to enhance access and networks.

Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious, Monmouthshire

- Support the sustainable growth of existing businesses including our larger businesses
- Finding our place in relation to regional growth opportunities
- Increase uptake of support for people wishing to start or grow a business.
- Continue to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture.
- Encourage innovation and clustering in sectors.
- Make public procurement spend more accessible
- Foster a thriving local food economy

Infrastructure: A well- connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment

- Inform the use and distribution of employment land and premises.
- Explore the Council’s role in the delivery of employment floor space.
- Support improvements in digital connectivity

- Support a sustainable transport system that contributes to our economic ambition and the vision of the Local Transport Plan
- Attract investment from larger high value enterprise

3.2.3 The report evaluates the action plan under the four themes and objectives listed above in 3.2.2, considering progress to date, milestones and areas for development in 25/26. Appendix One provides a summary of the EES Strategy actions and measures achieved.

3.3 **EES Strategy Action Plan progress update**

3.3.1 The EES Strategy Action Plan progress update is included as Appendix One of this report and the following achievements are highlighted:

- Continued engagement with major employers throughout Monmouthshire considering how investment plans can be supported by land availability, communication links, training opportunities, links to regional clusters and University research programmes, and labour supply.
- Launched the MCC STEM Programme, embedding hands-on STEM learning in schools and strengthening links with major employers. A dedicated webpage and Hwb Network are supporting collaboration.
- Continued engagement with providers of skills training in locations adjacent to Monmouthshire with an aim of improving access and promoting Monmouthshire as a future location for training centres.
- Continuous review of employment land locations in Monmouthshire with a view to matching availability with investment opportunities.
- Review of opportunities for small scale flexible business spaces in the county. All nine council-managed MonSpace flexi-suites at CastleGate Business Park are now fully occupied.
- RLDP agreed by council October 2025 and submitted to the Welsh Government Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW).
- Adoption of Placemaking Plans in Usk and Chepstow, with draft plans in development for Monmouth, Abergavenny and Magor with Undy, subject to Cabinet approval December 2025. A consultant will be appointed in the coming months to commence the development of the Caldicot Placemaking Plan. This will contribute to our ambition to create vibrant and sustainable futures for our town and village centres.
- Economic impact of tourism increased to £352.41m in 2024, 1.9% increase on the previous year. This demonstrates the importance of the tourism sector to Monmouthshire's economy.
- Addressed barriers to employment and supported 82 people to gain employment in 24/25 above our annual target of 60. This has enabled people of all ages and backgrounds to have the skills to do well in work.
- Data held in our Evolutive CRM shows we received 478 business support enquiries from businesses and potential entrepreneurs in the period 01/04/23 – 30/09/25.
- Numerous events including Venture Graduate Business Breakfast, RLDP Business Engagement, Women in Business and Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence.
- Welsh Vegetables in Schools pilot working with local growers has enabled them to diversify whilst also supplying pupils with nutritious, local food. We have also supported the development of new safety standards and logistics, enabling growers to expand and new farmers to diversify into organic horticulture as part of this scheme.

3.3.2 The Action Plan Update (Appendix One) also identifies several areas for further development over the next 12 months. These include:

- Continue to promote Monmouthshire as a competitive and diverse location for business
- Establish a local skills task group linked to the Regional Skills Partnership
- Skills centre moves from exploratory to discovery stage considering local demand, workforce trends, and financial viability, continuing the dialogue with potential providers.
- Develop solutions to tackle the rise in young people not in education, employment, or training.
- Ensuring Monmouthshire can drive maximum benefit from regional growth opportunities.
- Developing town-based forums which bring together local businesses with local councils to shape placemaking and business opportunities in each town.

3.3.3 The Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee has an important role in scrutinising the delivery of the council's EES Strategy. The committee may use the findings to identify any further areas for development to be included in the action plan measures for 2025/26.

3.3.4 The new Local Growth Fund in Wales is currently out for consultation, which may impact future funding streams for local economic growth.

4. Integrated Impact Assessment (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding & corporate parenting)

4.1 An integrated impact assessment was completed for the strategy and action plan in 2024. As there have been no significant changes since that assessment, an update has not been required.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no additional resource implications as a result of this report. However, there may be implications in undertaking further actions identified in the EES Strategy Action Plan that would be subject to the usual council decision-making processes.

6. Consultees

- Paul Griffiths – Deputy Leader & Cabinet member for Economic Development & Planning
- Will McLean – Strategic Director Children, Learning, Economy & Skills
- Children, Learning Economy & Skills DMT
- Senior Leadership Team
- Andrew Jones – Head of Planning
- Nicholas Keyse – Head of Landlord Services
- Colette Bosley – Countryside, Destination, and Environment Manager
- Daniel Fordham – Regeneration and Placemaking Manager
- Nick Tulp – Head of Transport
- Ian Hoccom – Decarbonisation Manager
- Cath Fallon – Head of Strategic Change, Partnerships and Procurement
- Rhys James – Strategic Procurement Lead
- Christian Schmidt – Passenger Transport Planning and Projects Manager
- Elaine Blanchard – Sustainable Food Engagement Officer

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy Action Plan progress update – Appendix One

8. AUTHORS:

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