

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Place Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 29th 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.

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- 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 11th February 2026.