

Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy 2023



CONTENTS

1. Foreword	(2)	6. Key Priority Themes and Objectives	(25)
2. Our aspirations	(3)	6.1 Key Priority Theme One: Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire	
3. What Matters to Monmouthshire	(5)	• Introduction	(27)
• Our geography	(7)	• Our towns	(28-30)
• Our economy	(8)	• Key objectives	(32-35)
4. Developing the Strategy		6.2. Key Priority Theme Two: People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire	
• The process	(9)	• Introduction	(37)
• What the evidence tells us	(10-14)	• Key objectives	(38-43)
• Utilising the evidence	(15-16)	6.3. Key Priority Theme Three: Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire	
5. The Strategic Context	(18-19)	• Introduction	(45)
• Stronger Together - Monmouthshire's strategic role in the wider regional economy	(20)	• Key objectives	(46-61)
• Regional Strategic Economic Partnerships	(20)	6.4. Key Priority Theme Four: Infrastructure: A well connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment	
• Cardiff Capital Region City Deal	(21)	• Introduction	(63)
• The Western Gateway	(22)	• Key objectives	(64-70)
• Marches Forward	(23)		

7. Case studies

Creo Medical: Attracting investment and creating sustainable jobs	(39)
Siltbuster: Demonstrating employment progression	(41-42)
Mandarin Stone: Supporting sustainable growth	(47-48)
Cywain Business Clusters: Encourage innovation and clustering	(53-54)
Raglan Dairy: Make public procurement spend more accessible	(57-58)
Hive Mind Mead: Foster a thriving local food economy	(60-61)

Delivering our action plan

• <i>Place</i>	(71-74)
• <i>People</i>	(75-77)
• <i>Enterprise</i>	(78-81)
• <i>Infrastructure</i>	(82-84)

Foreword - by Councillor Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development

Monmouthshire is an exciting and profitable place to do business and I say to all those investors who may look at our strategy – “Come and Join Us”.

You will belong to a creative community of partners that is networked throughout South Wales, the South West of England and along the Marches. We are a county that builds bridges rather than barriers. Join us and you will be part of a successful economy that knows no borders.

This diverse business eco-system includes major manufacturers at the frontiers of global technology. It is networked into universities known world-wide for their research, innovation and business connections.

Large and successful business enterprises thrive in a context of an entrepreneurial culture in which smaller businesses emerge and flourish, providing the supply chains that consumers and larger businesses need.

Diversity is the distinguishing feature of the Monmouthshire economy. Large and small; manufacturing, construction, health and social care, agriculture and food, research and consultancy, professional services, tourism and hospitality, retail, arts and cultural activity – we all find our place in the supportive and diverse interdependence that characterises the Monmouthshire economy.

Monmouthshire values its citizens, the people who work for our businesses. We provide the best schools are well connected with the

colleges which can develop the skills needed by our citizens and their businesses. We share with our businesses a commitment to fairness in our economy and we recognise that through learning and commitment, citizens are valued and will thrive.

Monmouthshire is attractive because of the quality of life that this very special county offers. Our historic market towns and bustling villages set in glorious wooded hills and valleys offer the sociability, creativity and activity that enrich all our lives. It is these settings that attract businesses to Monmouthshire where they can grow and succeed.

We value the natural world in which we live and work. It is precious. Businesses in Monmouthshire support each other and their communities to work progressively towards forms of activity which reduce and ultimately eliminate our carbon footprints.

Of course we have challenges as we look to our futures. We will respond by building on what we have achieved. We will work to become better connected, digitally and physically. We continue to work with our partners at all levels of government to enhance our transport infrastructure, valuing our road connections but not being over-dependent upon them.

We have a well skilled and educated labour force but we recognise the skill gaps. We will continue to develop our relationships with colleges and universities to provide the pathways for our citizens into the learning that

they need. We will not have that many campuses within the county but in this century it is the relationships and the networks that we will build to provide what is needed.



Councillor Paul Griffiths

What this county needs beyond all else is to enhance capacity. There is a large unmet appetite to work and invest in Monmouthshire. Business tells us that a lack of supply of land and premises is an obstacle. Informed by this Strategy, the County Council that I help lead will work with business to provide the land that it needs.

Business also tells us that its investment needs to be supported by an enhanced supply of labour – valued and valuable people who can work and thrive in those businesses. The County Council will implement its policies to provide affordable housing, well connected to towns and businesses.

Our strategy sets out our aspirations to foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity.

Monmouthshire's Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy sets out our aspirations:

'To foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity'

Focusing on four key priority themes:



Place

A vibrant,
greener
Monmouthshire



Enterprise

A thriving,
ambitious
Monmouthshire



People

A fairer,
more successful
Monmouthshire



Infrastructure

A well connected
Monmouthshire
attracting business
investment

WHAT MATTERS TO MONMOUTHSHIRE



The ambition for the Council and county of Monmouthshire is to be a prosperous zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life – a place where everyone has the skills and opportunity to contribute to our local community and economy.

Our Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy builds on Monmouthshire's prevailing strengths and opportunities, focusing on existing businesses and new home-grown enterprises, enabling them to operate efficiently and achieve their growth plans, whilst targeting selective inward investment opportunities. It sets out how we will deliver our aspiration 'To foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity'.

The 2022-2028 Corporate and Community Plan sets out a clear purpose for the council and county of Monmouthshire 'To become a zero carbon County, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life'. To deliver its purpose the Council has set six inter-related objectives which it wants to address by enabling and empowering communities to work alongside us. These are for Monmouthshire to be a:

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place where there are vibrant town centres, a well-connected place and businesses that can grow and develop full of hope and enterprise;
- Sociable place to live where people have a home and a community where they feel engaged, valued and supported;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

OUR GEOGRAPHY & OUR ECONOMY



Our Geography

Located in south east Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales, the south west of England and the Midlands. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 93,000. The six main settlements are Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor, Monmouth, and Usk/Raglan, and although most of the geographical area is rural, 53% of the population live within wards which are defined as urban and many more residents value their close connection with the larger and smaller towns.

An integral element of Monmouthshire's distinctive settlement pattern arises from its historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas. The county has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south of the county, to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north west, and the river corridor of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the east.

The county is easily accessible using a number of strategic routes including the M4 and M48 motorways, the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465), the A449, A40 and A4042. Monmouthshire also has four railway stations; at Caldicot, Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction in the south of the county, and Abergavenny in the north. These provide rail links to the key settlements of Newport, Cardiff and to west Wales as well as to Bristol, London, Gloucester, Cheltenham, the Midlands, and Manchester.

Public transport within Monmouthshire is limited. Whilst the county has four railway stations, the bus services that link our towns with rural settlements are too infrequent for people to rely on them to access employment and local services. This results in an over-reliance on cars, increasing congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution. It also means people who cannot afford to own and run their own vehicle face barriers accessing training and employment.



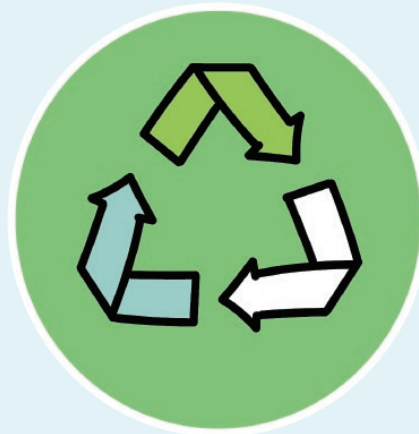
Our Economy

Monmouthshire's has a high value, highly skilled, diverse, and resilient economy, working to its full capacity, attracting investment to support its strong entrepreneurial culture.

The Council's ambition is to continue creating the right conditions for a prosperous local economy, delivering sustainable and inclusive growth that will contribute to the economic well-being of future generations. People of all ages and backgrounds having the skills to do well in work or start their own business.

A circular economy approach through designing out waste and enabling products and materials to securely re-enter our ecosystem and circulate through processes including reuse, recycle, refurbish etc as high-quality products. Our circular economy will tackle climate change reduce carbon emissions to a net zero county by 2030 and transforming the economy in terms of resources and efficiency, driving innovation for future productivity and competitiveness. A collaboration with key sectors and across the private and public sector, providing the means for sustainable growth and create the conditions for shared prosperity.

The Council will work with national, regional and local partners to increase investment, improve connectivity and continue to develop a thriving, ambitious and enterprising rural economy.



Developing the Strategy – Gathering the evidence:

The Process

The focus of this Strategy is preparing for the county's future economic needs. Recognising that we did not have all the answers, we began by bringing together a cadre of experts. This cadre included Council staff, elected Members, partners and other experts, with a broad range of socio-economic knowledge and lived experience.

As part of this process an economic analysis was commissioned to provide an evidence base to help identify and shape potential policy interventions to achieve the Council's aspiration - 'To foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity'.

The economic analysis provided a review of Monmouthshire's current economic profile and an overview of the key opportunities for and constraints to the local economy. Observations within the report set out the potential future direction of the economy and the conditions that would be required to realise its full potential. These recommendations have provided the basis for the strategic direction and proposed outcomes, forming the key building blocks and informing the four priority themes, that guide this Strategy. Each priority theme identifies the problems we are trying to solve and what we intend to do to address them.

What the evidence tells us:

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.

However, the key opportunities and challenges facing the county's economy include the following:

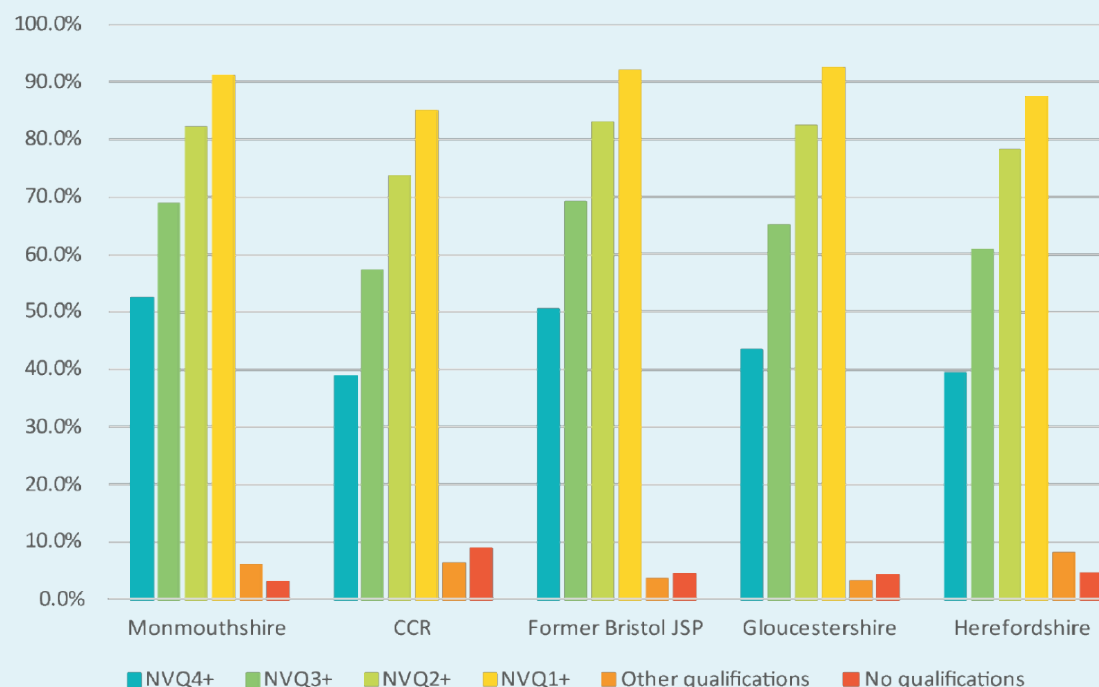
- 25.9% of Monmouthshire's residents are aged over 65 whilst 58.3% are of working age (16-64 years). The working age population fell between 2011 and 2021 whilst the elderly population increased by 26.2%.
- Monmouthshire's older population will be increasingly dependent on a declining working age population. This raises key challenges in relation to the ability of the area to attract and sustain business investment, stimulate employment growth, and enhance overall competitiveness. This highlights a need for additional, high-value jobs to attract younger people and to rebalance the age profile of Monmouthshire. In order to sustain a younger working age population it is also recognised that there needs to be an increased supply of more affordable housing.
- Monmouthshire has the highest house prices in Wales averaging £382k (Hometrack, December 2022), more than 9 times average earnings. This has contributed towards higher than average land values, impacting the level of development achieved in county, as well as the capital receipts generated from disposal of development sites.
- There is a correlation between the demographic profile of the area and the character of the housing market. The combination of high house prices and affordability pressures means that many younger people and families are unable to afford to live in Monmouthshire.
- Delivering appropriate housing in Monmouthshire is critical to addressing the county's demographic challenges. This should include not just the delivery of more homes in response to general under-supply, but the provision of a greater mix of housing types, tenures and sizes. Doing so should help enable the growth of the working-age population and contribute to the tackling of Monmouthshire's affordability challenges. Monmouthshire County Council will therefore support the creation of an additional 5,940 new homes that are net zero carbon ready with a requirement for 50% affordable housing, as set out in the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan 2018 -2033.

- The unemployment rate for residents aged over 16 in Monmouthshire in the period from January to December 2022 was 1.9% (equivalent to 900 residents). This is lower than the wider CCR area (2.7%) and neighbouring English authorities. Such a level of unemployment is 'frictional' – it represents only those few people moving between jobs in an economy which is operating at full capacity. A shortage of labour is restricting the potential for businesses to grow.

- Just 3.2% of people aged between 16 and 64 in Monmouthshire have no qualifications. The local population is highly educated, with 52.5% of people having an NVQ Level 4 qualification or above. Nevertheless, there are specific skill gaps which need to be addressed to ensure that local people can benefit from higher value jobs. There are no higher education establishments in the county and many young people leave the area to attend university. High property prices and unaffordable rents also contribute to a net outflow of young people from the local labour market.

Growing Monmouthshire's Future Economy : Economic Analysis

Figure 4.7 Educational attainment of working age population



- 62% of Monmouthshire's residents are employed in the most highly skilled jobs: comprising managers, directors, professional occupations: associate professionals and technical. The median gross weekly earnings for those who work in Monmouthshire (£630.50) are 11.8% lower than for those that live in the authority area. This points towards a proportion of higher earners commuting elsewhere for work purposes.

Table 4.4 Median gross weekly earnings

	Monmouthshire	CCR	Former Bristol JSP	Gloucestershire	Herefordshire
Median Gross Weekly Earnings by Residence	£714.80	£610.17	£659.78	£660.50	£560.10
Median Gross Weekly Earnings by Workplace	£630.50	£582.20	£646.83	£606.20	£543.20
Residence-based earnings as % of workplace-based earnings	113.3%	104.8%	102.0%	109.0%	103.1%

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings (2022)

- Monmouthshire is also constrained by its poor public transport connections, both within the county and with its neighbouring authorities. Whilst there are some good rail connections from Severn Tunnel Junction to Bristol, Cardiff and Newport, Monmouthshire's larger towns have no direct rail connections to the Southwest of England. Poor rail and bus connections across the county are also likely to contribute to the issues facing businesses seeking to expand in Monmouthshire that have to rely on workers living locally or having reliable access to a car.
- The overwhelming majority of businesses operating in Monmouthshire are small scale, with 44.7% of all businesses having a turnover of £0-99,000 per annum and with 0-9 employees (91.6%). Whilst we recognise the contribution of small businesses to the Monmouthshire economy, we also recognise that the 10% of Monmouthshire businesses with a turnover in excess of £1 million contribute 75% of the county's gross domestic product.
- The county's vacancy rate for office premises stands at just 0.3%, whilst for industrial premises it is only 0.1%. A lack of developed space for economic activity is a significant constraint on the further development of the county', emphasising the need to make additional space available.

- According to STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) 2.34 million visitors came to Monmouthshire in 2022, generating more than £285 million for the local economy, and supporting 3,356 full time equivalent jobs. 2022 STEAM figures show strong recovery of Monmouthshire's visitor economy post-pandemic with the economic impact of tourism increased by 3.7%, the number of visitors increased by 2.3% and the number of FTE jobs supported by tourism increased by 7.6% compared with 2019 figures.



- An Open Market Review is an exercise carried out with the market to determine expected private sector deployment of broadband infrastructure. The Open Market Review undertaken by Welsh Government in 2022, identified a significantly improved picture in Monmouthshire, with 1,238 or 2.5% of all premises classified as 'white' (i.e., with no qualifying broadband infrastructure, and not likely to be developed within three years). A further 2,610 or 5.2% of all premises are 'under review' (i.e. suppliers have reported planned broadband coverage, but those plans have been judged as potentially being at risk of not being completed). This compares favourably to the average figures for Wales, in which 5.1% of all premises are classified as 'white' and a further 7.3% as under review.
- In terms of Next Generation Access (30 Mbps and above) availability and plans, again the situation in Monmouthshire compares favourably to the Wales-wide data: 3,496 or 7% of premises in Monmouthshire were classified as 'white' for gigabit-capable coverage compared to 14% across Wales, and 5,701 or 14% of premises in Monmouthshire were classified as 'under review' for gigabit-capable coverage, compared to 39.2% across Wales. This means that if providers' plans are delivered as planned, at least 81.6% of premises in Monmouthshire should have access to gigabit-capable broadband from at least one provider within the next three years, compared to 46.8% across Wales.

Utilising the evidence

Comparisons with neighbouring local authorities indicate that whilst Monmouthshire performs comparatively well on some criteria, more can be achieved. This creates both a challenge and an opportunity as the Council seeks to achieve a step change in future economic growth and local prosperity.

The county has in recent years had a comparatively low rate of business growth. This reflects the fact that it has fully utilised the supply of labour and land. We are confident that once an increased supply of labour and land is made available, the underlying conditions of the economy will allow it to thrive.

The continuing short supply of new industrial floorspace is affecting the ability to attract and retain businesses and therefore create new sustainable employment. This limits our ability to expand our local economy which could also force some existing businesses to relocate outside of the county.

This Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy therefore dovetails with the Replacement Local Development Plan in identifying opportunities to address these challenges, whilst also considering the issues facing our town centres, existing infrastructure, visitor facilities and public realm.

We will work with the private and public sector through a needs-based approach, to transform our economy to a new level of sustainable job growth and longer-term shared prosperity. This will be achieved by focussing activity on achieving the following four key priority themes:

- **Place:** – A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire
- **People:** - A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire
- **Enterprise:** - A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire
- **Infrastructure:** A well connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment

Our economy will therefore require a wide range of job opportunities to serve the needs of all residents, recognising the particularly important function served by less highly skilled positions. Poor access to services may also have an impact on our economy as people will spend more time outside our county. The demographic imbalance and lower rate of economic activity places pressure on our county in terms of its declining workforce, this could potentially hinder our ability to sustain and grow our economy.

We will work with our regional strategic economic partners, CCR, Western Gateway, Marches Forward Partnership as well as education and training providers, to identify specific areas that require intervention and develop appropriate courses and training schemes. Whilst residents of all ages should have access to training and development to enable them to access job opportunities locally, this will be particularly important in helping to retain and attract young people into the area. We need to empower them to shape a future for themselves, in Monmouthshire, and equip them to drive the economy towards a higher value future.



THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT



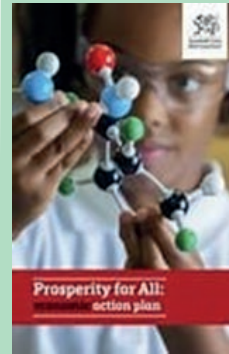
The Strategic Context

In addition to the Council's Community and Corporate Plan, there are legislative and policy requirements that inform and influence the way in which the Council looks to develop the economy of Monmouthshire. This is detailed in the key overarching legislative and policy requirements and priorities within the strategies below:



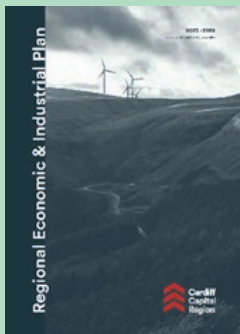
The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act focuses on improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The aim of the Act is to help create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. Procurement is one of the seven corporate areas for change in the Act's statutory guidance.



Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan

The plan splits Wales into three economic regions to enable the implementation of a place-based approach to economic development; Monmouthshire is located in the South East Wales region. It identifies three national thematic sectors and four foundation sectors that will shape the work of the Welsh Government as it seeks to seize opportunities and realise potential.



Cardiff Capital Region Industrial and Economic Growth Plan

The CCR Growth Plan's two objectives are to boost competitiveness and tackle inequalities throughout the region by working collaboratively with public and private stakeholders within the CCR and with its neighbouring authorities.



Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: a plan for employability and skills

Welsh Government is committed to creating a Wales where individuals of all ages can receive a high-quality education, with jobs for all, where businesses can thrive in a net zero economy that champions fairness and equality.

Vision Monmouthshire 2040: Economic Growth and Ambition Statement



This statement identifies some of the challenges facing Monmouthshire that need to be addressed to strengthen its economy so that it can provide for future generations. It is intended to sit alongside the replacement LDP (Local Development Plan), which will identify suitable employment sites and premises; increasing the availability of housing sites; and seek to tackle geographical differences in employment and housing markets.

Monmouthshire Inward Investment Prospectus 2021



The prospectus builds on Vision Monmouthshire 2040 with the aim of attracting businesses to grow in Monmouthshire. It identifies some key focus areas that should be prioritised and advocates the provision of 43ha of B use employment land from 2018 to 2033 and a network of quality sites with varied characteristics in a mix of private and public ownership.

Welsh Government Net Zero strategic plan



This Plan sets out how we will play our part in responding to the climate emergency and align with Welsh Ministers' ambition for the public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030.

Cardiff Capital Region Strategic Business Plan and Wider Investment Fund



The purpose of this Business Plan is to establish policies that will attract new investment, improve connectivity, and develop the region's skills and education. It proposes a Strategic Sites Programme to address challenges facing the CCR relating to a shortage of good quality employment sites and premises.

Stronger Together - Monmouthshire's strategic role in the wider regional economy

Our economy has clear potential to be a key contributor to future economic growth of the CCR 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.

Regional Strategic Economic Partnerships

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 City Deal, The Western Gateway 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.

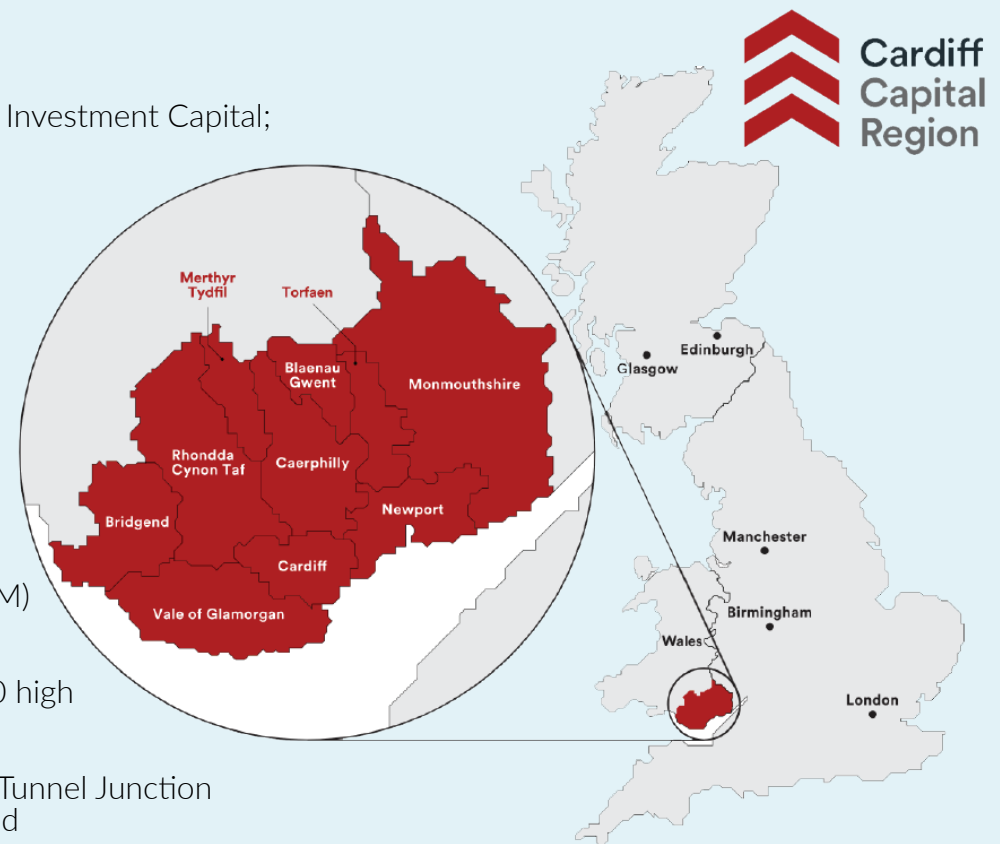


Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal involves UK Government, Welsh Government and the ten regional Southeast Wales Authorities and will transition into the Southeast Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) in March 2024. Its purpose is to build on the region's sectoral strengths, high skill base and three successful universities. The CCR City Deal seeks to accelerate economic growth and productivity through a series of considered targeted investments in skills, infrastructure, innovation-led scalable projects, businesses, and priority industry sectors including Compound Semi-Conductors and MedTech.

It has brought the following benefits to Monmouthshire:

1. Partner member for the £50M Innovation Investment Fund;
2. Seizing the local business opportunities for £50M Innovation Investment Capital; £50M Strategic Premises Fund and £10M Challenge Fund;
3. Shareholder and lead council for CS Foundry Ltd, integral to establishment of CS Connected which secured a £45M UKRI SIPF award, with Microchip being one of the founding partners;
4. Shareholder in CCR Energy Ltd i.e., part ownership of the former Aberthaw Power Station which is being re-purposed as a green energy park;
5. Lead partner in the deployment of c£4M InFuSe programme – married with £10M Challenge Fund;
6. Co-agent on the Challenge Fund Food Security project (£2.4M) with Cardiff Council;
7. Circa £2M funds (debt finance) to Creo Medical – creating 40 high value jobs
8. Recipient of c£1.5M funds for Metro Plus Scheme at Severn Tunnel Junction -leveraging match contributions from the Local Transport Fund
9. ULEV monies for roll-out of CCR Electric Vehicle Charging facilities



The Western Gateway

The Western Gateway is a pan regional partnership for South Wales and Western England involving Local Authorities, West of England Combined Authority, City Regions, Local Enterprise Partnerships, UK and Welsh Governments. The purpose of the strategic partnership is to promote and maximise economic growth across South Wales and the West of England to create jobs, boost prosperity and support the world-renowned universities and businesses of the region.

This Gateway Partnership has set out the following ambitions:

1. 'Net Zero' - Working to become the UK's first Green Energy Super Cluster by capitalising on the area's significant natural assets in solar, tidal, marine, and wind and leading capabilities in hydrogen, nuclear and industrial decarbonisation.
2. 'Supporting Innovation' - Connecting the area's highly innovative sectoral clusters in Advanced Engineering, Creative Industries, Digital Connectivity (mobile telecommunications) and Data Solutions (businesses that create wealth from data such as fintech and space) to create a super-cluster with the scale to compete on the global stage.
3. 'Connecting Communities' - Mapping the area's strategic transport plans to identify where there are gaps and use the information to help highlight where we need better connections that provide better transport and digital links to unlock 'net zero' potential.
4. Investment - utilising its advantage of being a global gateway, the Partnership wishes to attract inward investment and grow exports by £4 billion.



Marches Forward Partnership

'Marches Forward' is a unique strategic cross border partnership between neighbouring local authorities in Herefordshire, Powys, Monmouthshire and Shropshire. Its key aims are:

1. To tackle cross border shared interests, drive the best deal for our geography and boost investment into the region;
2. To establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value;
3. To focus on the economy and green growth with other shared interests to include transport and digital transformation nature, energy and climate change, health, housing and skills, food, rural development and the visitor economy.



The Partnership provides a flexible umbrella framework for joint working which supports local service delivery, based around how people and places function, rather than being confined within organisational or geographical boundaries. It enables us to harness the unique value of our cross-border location, supporting a shared understanding of 'life on the borders' as a focus for strategic joint working and to unlock additional investment into the area.

The priority themes of the Marches Forward Partnership are to work jointly as follows:

1. Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation
2. Transport and Digital Transformation
3. Health, Housing and Skills
4. Food, Rural Development and the Economy





OUR ASPIRATIONS, KEY PRIORITY THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

We have a clear aspiration for this Strategy:

'To foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity'

To deliver our aspiration, we have set four inter-related, key priority themes, which we will address by working collaboratively, across Council Directorates, with elected Members, our Partners and trusted experts.

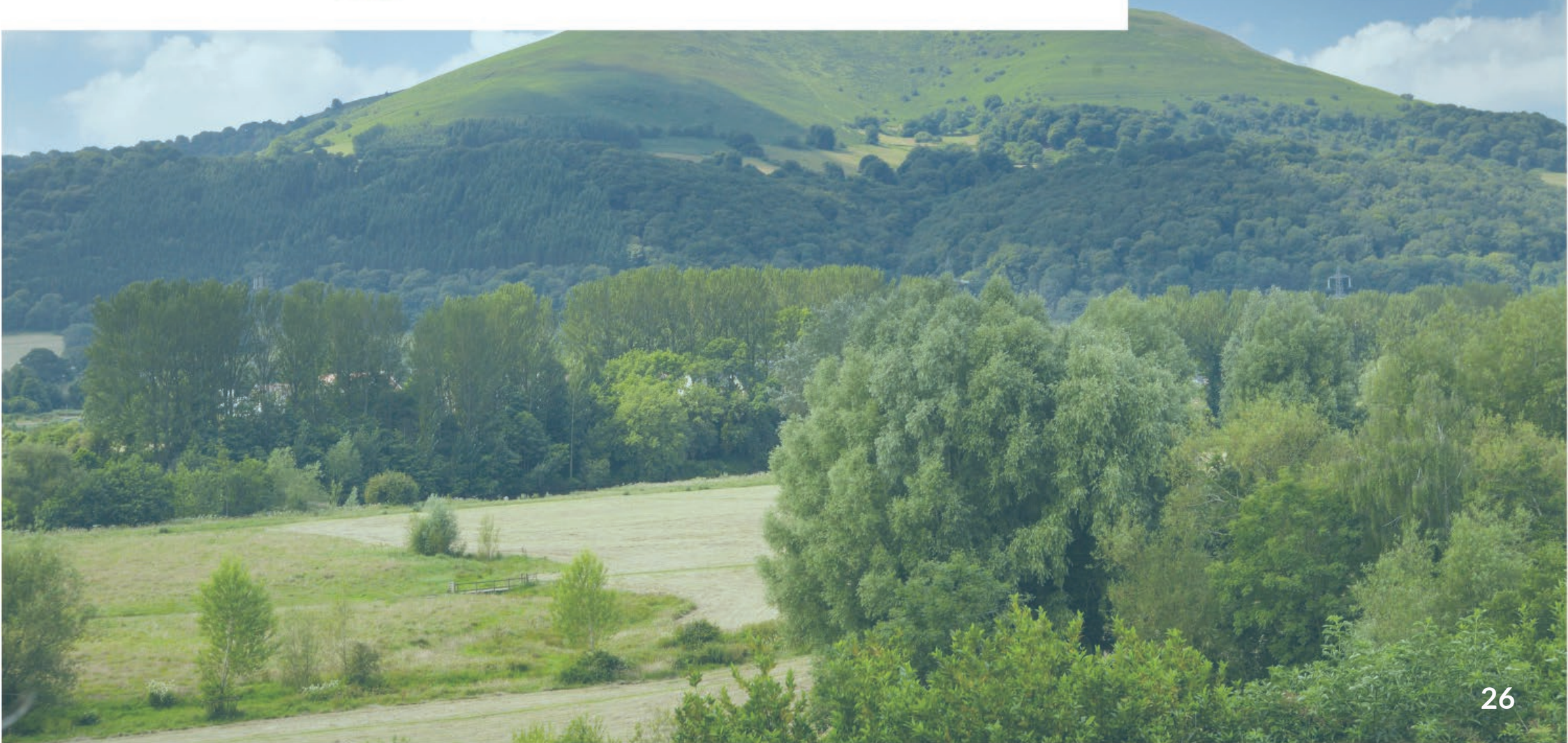
These are for Monmouthshire to be:

1. **Place: - A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire**
2. **People: - A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire**
3. **Enterprise: - A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire**
4. **Infrastructure: A well connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment**

Objectives have been identified for each of the four key priority themes, and an action plan, to complement this Strategy has been developed containing a number of key tasks that will be delivered in a timely manner, by teams across a number of directorates. Progress of this Plan will be monitored and evaluated regularly.

KEY PRIORITY THEME ONE

Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire





Monmouthshire's distinctiveness arises from its strategic position between the major centres in south Wales and the southwest of England and the Midlands; its rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south, to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons National Park to the northwest, the river corridor of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the east, and its historic market towns and villages.

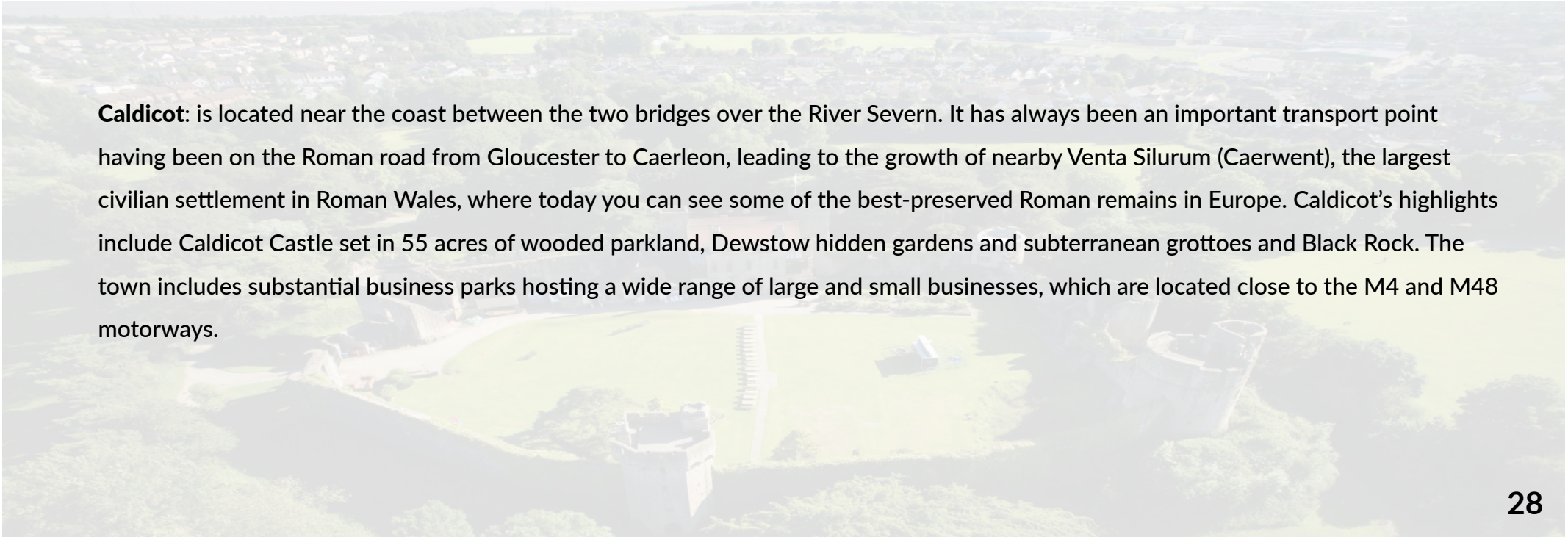
There are six main settlements in Monmouthshire; Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor, Monmouth, and Usk, and although the county is predominantly rural, 53% of the population live within wards which are defined as urban.



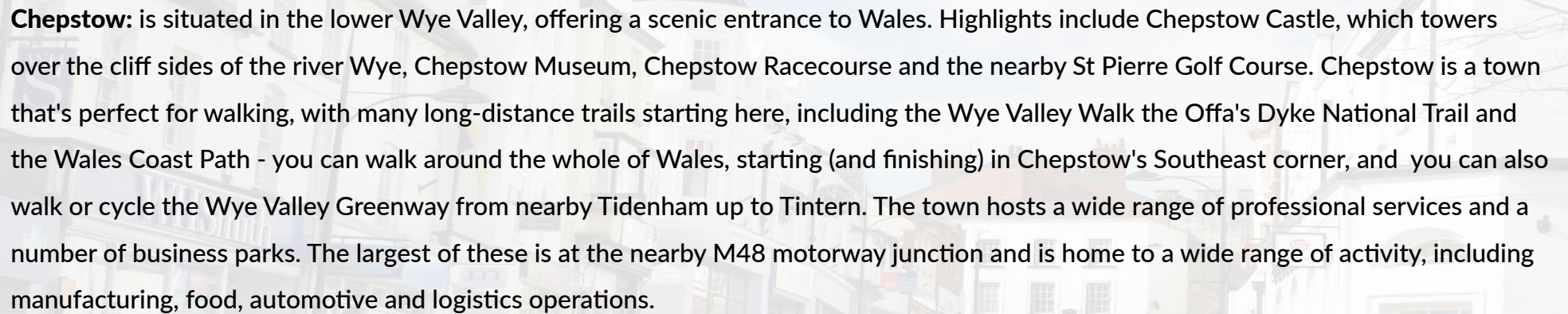


Our Towns


Abergavenny: is surrounded by seven mountains and is the perfect base for exploring the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. Its status as a food destination is well established, with its annual autumn Food Festival a staple on the culinary calendar and regular food and craft markets attracting the best artisan producers from across the region. Its main attractions include Abergavenny Castle and Museum, St Mary's Priory Church, the Market Hall and Castle Meadows. The town offers a wide range of professional business services. A number of larger businesses also have their headquarters locally, which benefit from proximity to the A40 and A465.



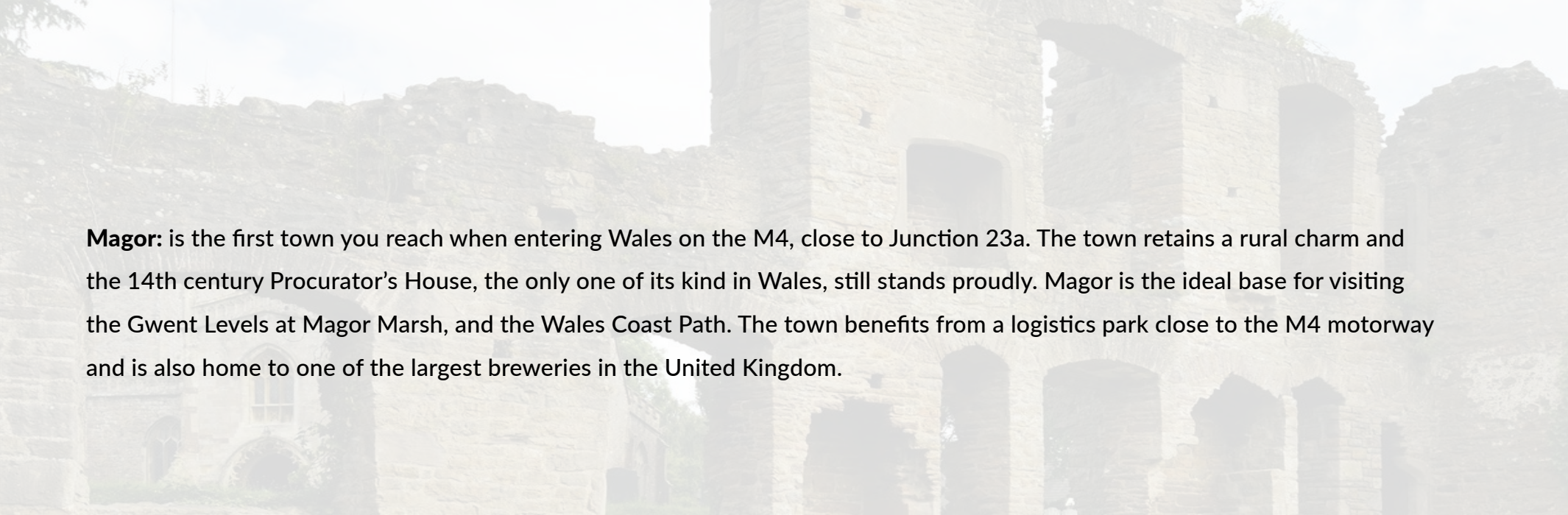
Caldicot: is located near the coast between the two bridges over the River Severn. It has always been an important transport point having been on the Roman road from Gloucester to Caerleon, leading to the growth of nearby Venta Silurum (Caerwent), the largest civilian settlement in Roman Wales, where today you can see some of the best-preserved Roman remains in Europe. Caldicot's highlights include Caldicot Castle set in 55 acres of wooded parkland, Dewstow hidden gardens and subterranean grottoes and Black Rock. The town includes substantial business parks hosting a wide range of large and small businesses, which are located close to the M4 and M48 motorways.



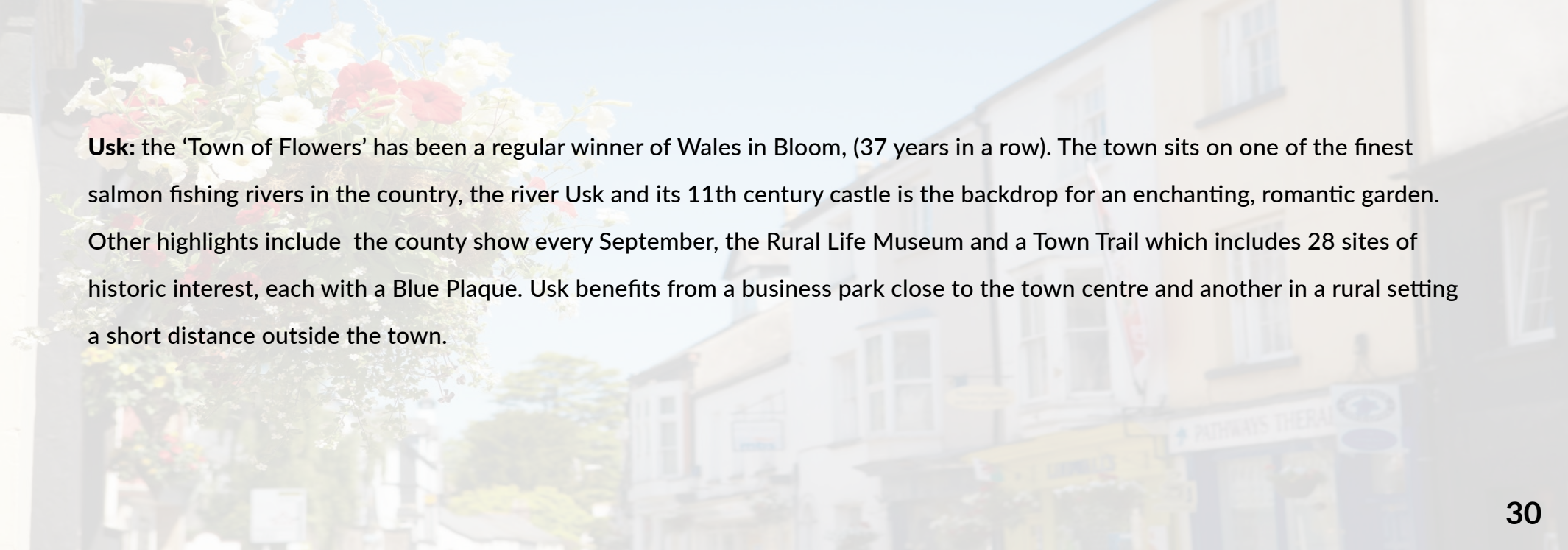
Chepstow: is situated in the lower Wye Valley, offering a scenic entrance to Wales. Highlights include Chepstow Castle, which towers over the cliff sides of the river Wye, Chepstow Museum, Chepstow Racecourse and the nearby St Pierre Golf Course. Chepstow is a town that's perfect for walking, with many long-distance trails starting here, including the Wye Valley Walk the Offa's Dyke National Trail and the Wales Coast Path - you can walk around the whole of Wales, starting (and finishing) in Chepstow's Southeast corner, and you can also walk or cycle the Wye Valley Greenway from nearby Tidenham up to Tintern. The town hosts a wide range of professional services and a number of business parks. The largest of these is at the nearby M48 motorway junction and is home to a wide range of activity, including manufacturing, food, automotive and logistics operations.



Monmouth: the UK's first Bee Town, nestles in the lower reaches of the beautiful Wye Valley and has been a centre for tourism since 1780. Well known for its iconic 13th century gatehouse bridge, Monmouth has a famous past with its connections to Henry V, Geoffrey of Monmouth and (more recently) Queen, Oasis & Simple Minds who all recorded at nearby Rockfield studios. Other highlights include its Georgian Shire Hall and Museum, Ancre Hill Vineyard, The Savoy Theatre and The Kymin. Monmouth has two business parks located close to the A40, which are home to a range of businesses, including a number of key employers.



Magor: is the first town you reach when entering Wales on the M4, close to Junction 23a. The town retains a rural charm and the 14th century Procurator's House, the only one of its kind in Wales, still stands proudly. Magor is the ideal base for visiting the Gwent Levels at Magor Marsh, and the Wales Coast Path. The town benefits from a logistics park close to the M4 motorway and is also home to one of the largest breweries in the United Kingdom.



Usk: the 'Town of Flowers' has been a regular winner of Wales in Bloom, (37 years in a row). The town sits on one of the finest salmon fishing rivers in the country, the river Usk and its 11th century castle is the backdrop for an enchanting, romantic garden. Other highlights include the county show every September, the Rural Life Museum and a Town Trail which includes 28 sites of historic interest, each with a Blue Plaque. Usk benefits from a business park close to the town centre and another in a rural setting a short distance outside the town.

KEY OBJECTIVES



- **Promote the distinctive diversity of Monmouthshire as a county of opportunity**

Monmouthshire is one of the most diverse and competitive economies in Wales. It is home to a vast array of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which provide the economy with a high degree of resilience. The county's gateway location to southeast Wales and close proximity to growing cities such as Bristol and Cardiff, increases our ability to attract investment, skilled labour and visitors, particularly as our residents are also among the best qualified in Wales. All these factors create the right conditions for the many successful businesses already located here to thrive and grow. We will undertake a wide range of promotional activities to encourage new businesses to land and expand.

- **Support the vitality of our town centres**

The vibrancy of our towns is pivotal to our future success, but they continue to be threatened by wider economic factors such as rising energy costs, declining household spending power and changing patterns of retail. Our towns will need constant and creative re-imagining if they are to retain their role as retail centres, visitor attractions and motors of our county's economy.

Individual town 'Placemaking plans' are being produced jointly with town councils, to ensure that we understand the aspirations, issues and opportunities that face our towns and communities, ensuring that we have an ambitious vision and a clear plan for each. Each plan will reflect the towns unique character and will set out the actions and interventions required to realise the vision and address the challenges and opportunities that have been identified.

Although each town is unique, there are some common threads throughout the plans that have been completed so far – including supporting the amenities, events and experiences that attract people to our towns, ensuring that the streetscape in each town centre is high quality and fit for purpose, and working with property owners and landlords to minimise town centre vacancies.

- **Support the transition towards net zero and protect our environment**

We want Monmouthshire to be a net zero carbon county, a green place to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency. We also want Monmouthshire to be a thriving and ambitious place, where innovation and enterprise result in a productive and sustainable low carbon community and economy.

In May 2019, Monmouthshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency setting out a clear commitment to:

- Strive to reduce its own carbon emissions to net zero in line with the Welsh Government target of 2030.
- Encourage and support residents and businesses to take their own actions to reduce their carbon emissions.
- Work with partners across the county and other councils and organisations to help develop and implement best practice methods in limiting global warming.

Using the Welsh Government's Carbon Reporting Framework more than 71% of the Council's carbon footprint comes from the indirect emissions arising from the supplies, services and works the Council buys to support the delivery of Council services. Any reduction in the Council's footprint will need to be delivered in partnership with our suppliers to establish what both parties can do to reduce our carbon footprint going forward.

We will continue to ensure homeowners and landlords have access to sources of advice and support to retrofit homes to alleviate fuel poverty, increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, at the same time providing opportunities and demand for the local low-carbon economy. We are developing strategies and implementing projects to decarbonise the Council's own operations and create an accessible public EV (Electric Vehicle) charging infrastructure across the county. Our Local Area Energy Plan will identify and prioritise opportunities to decarbonise Monmouthshire, increasing demand for local low-carbon skills and investment linked to wider regional and national opportunities and plans.

To meet local and national net zero carbon objectives for 2050, public sector bodies will work with private sector business to promote energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. We shall also work with partners to increase local understanding and adoption of sustainable and regenerative farming practices and reduce carbon emissions from land use.

- **Support rural diversification**

With farm incomes squeezed by pressures from across and beyond the food system, diversification remains attractive as a tried and tested way of strengthening the farm business and wider rural economy. A strong diversification provides a new income stream, spreads risk, adds variety and interest to the working day, and may bring employment opportunities to family members (especially the younger generation) or others in the local area. Conversely, a poorly planned diversification may add to the stress and worry faced by families who are already stretched, further destabilise the farm's finances, and strain local infrastructure and relationships with other residents.

Recognising this, we will support strong diversification proposals where they align with the Council's wider policy objectives. If there is doubt as to a proposal's viability, officers will provide support and signposting as appropriate and further impartial advice to strengthen the plan put forward. Diversification in this context means any additional enterprise that does not unduly compromise the underlying farming activity, including but not limited to processing raw materials (e.g., food, timber, fibre), tourism and leisure, conservation, energy, broadband, retail, and commercial uses.

Though diversification is usually associated with agriculture, other rural businesses may also diversify to spread risk, add a new income stream, and provide a new product or service. These too would be supported under this strategy, provided that the proposal was credible and in line with the Council's wider policy objectives.

- **Enhance the experience for visitors and deliver sustainable growth in our tourism economy**

We will work with destination stakeholders and partners to develop and promote experiences which meet and exceed the expectations of current and future visitors. These experiences will be developed to target visitors who share a passion for environmental, cultural, and social enhancement, and to inspire visits from others who share their passion through storytelling and brand advocacy.

Through UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding, we will reimagine tourism to develop a more fair and accessible offer which benefits the people and places of Monmouthshire, to ensure a warm welcome remains at the heart of our visitor experience.

Our aim is to deliver sustainable growth across all parts of the county and year, ensuring that economic growth and wider wellbeing benefits ultimately enhance the quality of life for everyone in Monmouthshire, whether they are here for a day, a week, or a lifetime. In so doing we will keep the maximum potential benefits of tourism within the county by encouraging short supply chains and the use of local suppliers and products. This will in turn further develop Monmouthshire's distinct sense of place and identity to enhance the visitor experience and create sustainable competitive advantage.

KEY PRIORITY THEME TWO

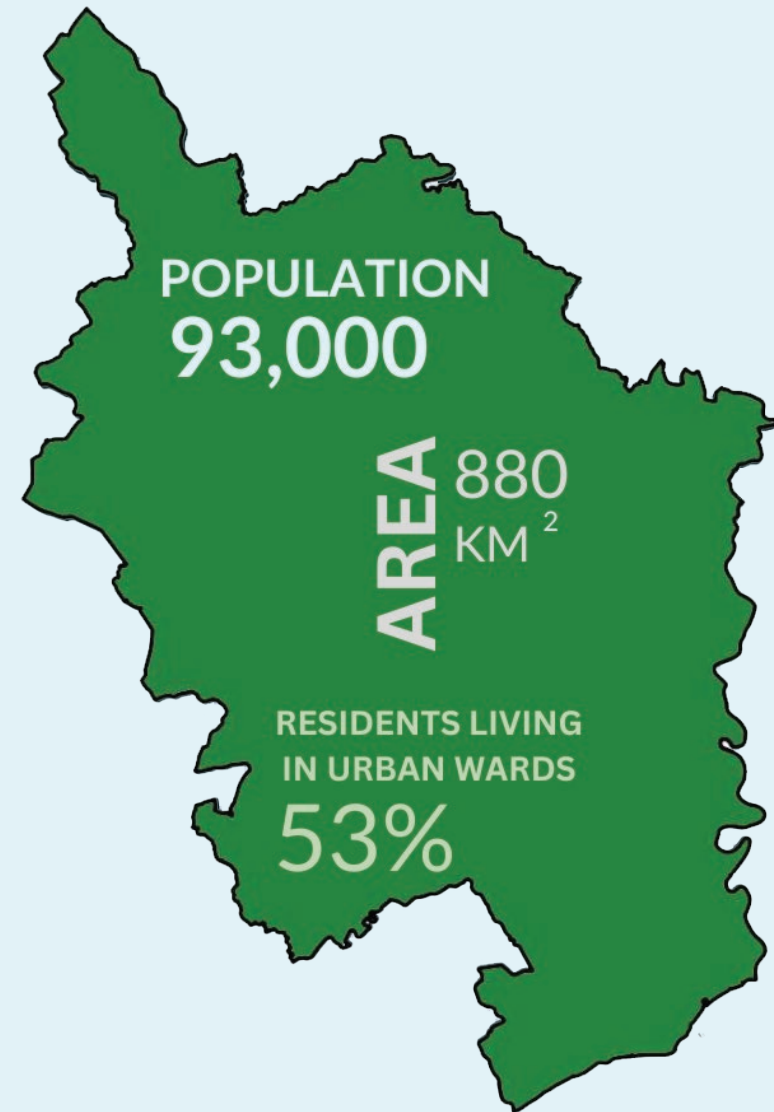
People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire



Monmouthshire is a rural county, with a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare. With circa 93,000 people living in approximately 880 square kilometres, this, by way of illustration, is equivalent to approximately one person to the size of an average football pitch.

Monmouthshire's population is ageing, with a current higher than average proportion of older people, which is forecast to rise further. 25.9% of Monmouthshire's residents are aged over 65 whilst 58.3% are of working age (16-64 years). The working age population fell between 2011 and 2021 whilst the elderly population increased by 26.2%.

Conversely, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033. This means that Monmouthshire's older population will be increasingly dependent on a declining working age population. This raises key challenges in relation to the ability of the area to attract and sustain business investment, stimulate employment growth, and enhance overall competitiveness.



Key Objectives

- **Support a balanced change in the demographic profile of our county**

Monmouthshire has an ageing population and a relative absence of 20–40-year-olds, which impacts on the overall economic and social sustainability of our communities. The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) aims to increase opportunities for the younger population to both live and work within Monmouthshire, creating a more balanced demography and socially and economically sustainable communities. The RLDP proposes a level of growth that will deliver positive demographic change over the Plan period (2018 -2033) with an increase in younger and working age groups; support for local economic growth and delivery of good quality affordable homes, which will assist in attracting and retaining a younger, economically active population and balancing the ageing population.

- **Support the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities**

Sustainable job opportunities are a key priority for Monmouthshire, driven by the need to address the shrinking working age population and high levels of out-commuting. This will be achieved through a range of mechanisms and interventions, including this Strategy, the RLDP and the Local Transport Plan. The RLDP identifies a level of growth that aims to provide an appropriate balance of household and jobs growth. This level of growth will enable Monmouthshire to attract and retain investment, create jobs, improve strategic infrastructure through the identification of sufficient employment land for traditional employment uses (B use classes) and promote employment generators important to our economy. Job growth will also come via the growth and retention of existing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the formation of new ones, with the supportive planning policies, marketing and other interventions required to make this happen.



Creo Medical

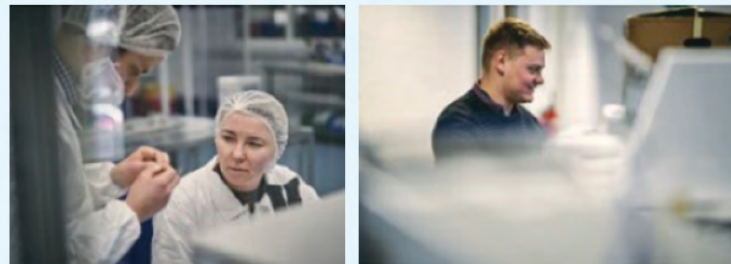
CASE STUDY: Attracting investment and creating sustainable jobs

Headquartered in Chepstow, multi-award winning Creo Medical focus on the development and commercialisation of minimally invasive devices by bringing Advanced Energy to therapeutic endoscopy. Creo's first device, Speedboat Inject, is now in every-day use worldwide, providing healthcare providers with improved pathways and patients with life changing outcomes.

In 2022, Creo Medical was awarded with the Fastest growing company in Wales having doubled the size of its Chepstow HQ and expanded its business to one which now sees its devices treat patients the world over.

Our Chepstow base puts us at the heart of one of the leading regions not just in the UK but globally in terms of delivering the next wave of innovative treatments for patients, with support from MCC and others providing us with the necessary foundations to grow into the international company we are today whilst simultaneously expanding the operations at our Chepstow HQ.

But what makes a successful business is its people, and we have been fortunate to match a range of local talent to excellent jobs and opportunities, laying the foundation for our transformational technology to be both 'made in Wales' and world-leading.



"Monmouthshire is a great place for growing business - fantastic location, well connected and full of talented people who have enriched our organisation with their expertise and skills."



- **Equip people with skills and qualifications to enter employment, enable employment progression and explore a Skills Centre in Monmouthshire**

Monmouthshire benefits from high employment rates and its residents have high levels of skills and qualifications. A large proportion of people work in highly skilled jobs, with 52.5% having a qualification at NVQ level 4 and above. Just 3.2% of those aged between 16 and 64 have no qualifications, compared to 8.9% across the wider CCR area. Although the local population is highly educated, there are some known skills gaps which may limit the potential for future economic growth.

Through this strategy we shall seek to develop the skills of all residents and deliver higher value job opportunities. Our residents will be equipped with a range of skills and qualifications in diverse sectors, to enable employment progression and to meet the needs of existing and future businesses in Monmouthshire. Our Community and Corporate Plan 2022 -2028 commits to promoting career paths in shortage areas such as care and construction earlier and more consistently. This strategy will aim to reduce labour shortages in these sectors working closely with private and public sector organisations.

We will explore a Skills Centre in Monmouthshire working with our businesses, further education and higher education partners, and training provider. Monmouthshire will be a place that young people will not need to leave because they will have the skills to work in new and emerging industries or set up their own businesses within the county.

Whilst retirement is the biggest reason for economic inactivity for Monmouthshire residents, long term sickness is also a significant factor. We shall support those facing health challenges to move closer to the labour market.



Siltbuster

CASE STUDY: Demonstrating employment progression

Siltbuster has been established for over 20 years and is the UK's leading wastewater treatment company, providing responsive solutions to a range of customers. The company is part of the Workdry Group and has a turnover of over £30m; covering all of the UK as well as focused overseas activities for construction, municipal and industrial markets.

Based in Monmouth, the business has a 10 acre site where it has developed a purpose-built facility with all technical and support services being provided in house. The breadth of employment ranges from technical sales, accounts, engineering design, laboratory testing through to engineering, manufacturing-assembly and supply chain management. The business uses an extensive supply chain, including many other South Wales businesses in the fabrication of its equipment.

The business currently has over 90 staff employed; with 70% based from the Monmouth head office. The remote staff based across the UK provide a local response to client enquiries and ensure that service levels are maintained for water treatment installations.

The business currently has over 90 staff employed; with 70% based from the Monmouth head office

Siltbuster

In its 20-year history the business has seen sustained growth; with step changes triggered by a shift in environmental regulation and compliance standards. Whilst traditionally this was within the construction market, there is a growing focus on wider application of Siltbuster's products and services.

In 2015 the company introduced its first apprenticeship, engaging with Newport and District Group Training Association (NDGTA) based in Cwmbran to shape a programme aligned to the multi-skilled engineering nature of the business. For the last 8 years Siltbuster has continued to invest in the apprenticeship pathway allowing for continued business growth; with at least one new apprentice each year, which has recently become two staff each year due to sustained growth.

In early 2024 the company will pass the 100-employee mark and the apprentice training scheme continues to build momentum and is critical in ensuring the right skills for the business

The apprenticeship programme is completed over a four-year period and comprises one day per week to complete the academic element of the apprenticeship to HNC level, 12 months at college in the first 2 years block release to complete the foundation training and NVQ level 3 practical training is completed in the workplace. The apprentices work in all areas and during the fourth year will specialise in their required role in the business. Some of the earlier apprentices have now gone on to critical roles in the business such as a project engineer, electrical controls design engineer or field engineering with permanent contracts. They work alongside other time served apprentices that have joined the business later in their career or graduates that have moved back to the region.

In addition to the 4-year apprenticeship programme, the business has supported all levels of staff through various NVQs, once again with the guidance of NDGTA and onsite mentors. Since the outset of the apprenticeship and training programme we have seen continued success in both the retention and progress of staff into various roles within the business.

In early 2024 the company will pass the 100-employee mark and the apprentice training scheme continues to build momentum and is critical in ensuring the right skills for the business. Whilst the apprenticeship programme to date has been focused on engineering, we are currently looking at other areas of the business where apprenticeships will be beneficial, such as financial services.

The business is passionate about making a difference in the water-environmental sector; challenging the conventional ways of working and the development of products to support its continued growth. The development of staff through various education pathways is an important investment, combined with the ambitions for the Monmouth facility as the Centre of Excellence for responsive wastewater treatment.



- **Collaborate with comprehensive schools, further and higher education partners to enhance access and networks**

Working alongside comprehensive schools, further and higher education partners and training providers, we will explore options for the development of well-defined training opportunities within existing facilities and local settings to address skills gaps in certain sectors. This will support the growth of existing businesses and attract new businesses to Monmouthshire. Monmouthshire has existing partnerships with further and higher education institutions, including Hartpury University, Coleg Gwent and Cardiff Metropolitan University. However, further collaboration is essential to improve access to institutions both within and outside of the county for future academic and vocational opportunities.

Post 16 learning opportunities within the county currently vary by secondary school and locality. Our aim is to develop a more equitable collaborative offer, that meets the needs of a broader cohort of young people. We propose to utilise a Welsh Government supported learning platform to enhance Level 3 programmes across all secondary schools while securing financial and learning sustainability. At level 2, Pathways to Employment programmes in skills shortage areas such as childcare and leisure will provide enhanced opportunities for all young people, including the most vulnerable, to gain the skills, academic and worked based qualifications and experience required by employers. We will work with others to provide the necessary work-based learning opportunities within our communities. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) partnerships, in all secondary schools and across all clusters, will provide relevance and application to programmes developed under the New Curriculum for Wales.

We will work with further and higher education partners, training providers and businesses to support vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities including the repair, maintenance, and improvement (RMI) industry which is relevant for delivery of building energy 'retrofit'. There is insufficient supply to meet demand in this sector, which is so essential for reduction in carbon emissions and household living costs (thermal insulation, upgrade of heating systems, microgeneration).



KEY PRIORITY THEME THREE

Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire has a high value, highly skilled, diverse, and resilient economy, working to its full capacity, attracting investment to support its strong entrepreneurial culture. 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.

However, comparisons with neighbouring local authorities indicate that whilst Monmouthshire performs comparatively well on some criteria, more can be achieved. The county has in recent years had a comparatively low rate of business growth which reflects the fact that it has fully utilised the supply of labour and land.



Key Objectives

- **Support the sustainable growth of existing businesses including our larger businesses**

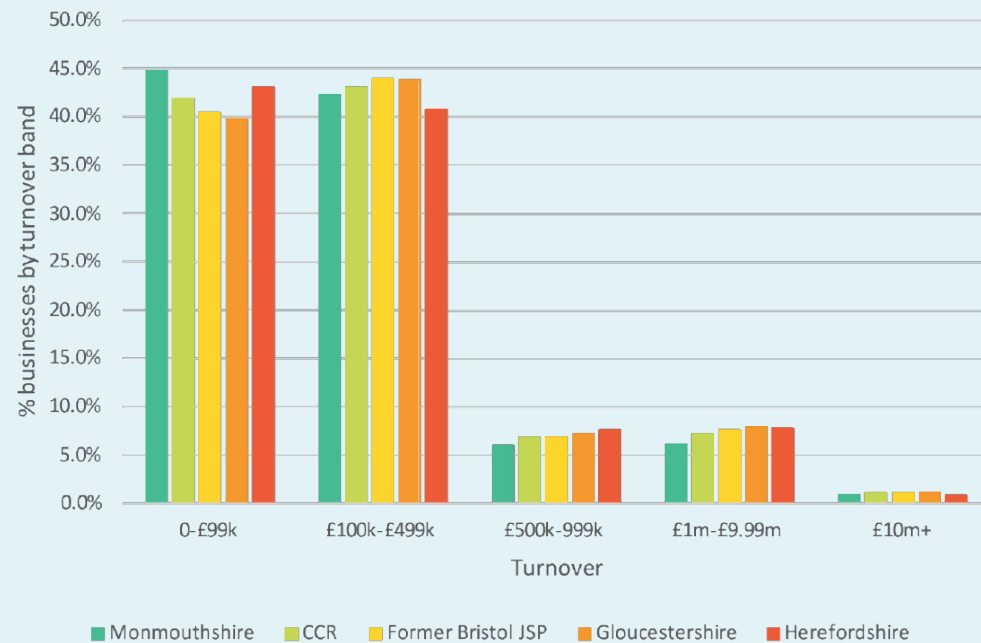
In 2022, there were 4,575 VAT and/or PAYE registered enterprises in Monmouthshire. The overwhelming majority of businesses operating in the county are small scale, with 44.7% of all businesses operating with a turnover of less than £100,000 per annum and 91.6% having 0-9 employees. Medium-sized businesses (50-249 employees) account for only 1.1% of Monmouthshire enterprises, which is lower than neighbouring areas. Businesses employing ten or more staff account for approximately 70% of the county's economic output.

Monmouthshire businesses need on average to create more than one job per business to achieve our target of supporting the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities. We will continue to work with these businesses to help them access the talent, sites, finance and support they need to enable them to grow their business and increase the range of employment opportunities available to local people.

The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) makes provision for a minimum of 38ha of employment land for B uses classes (B1, B2 and B8) over the Plan period (2018-2033). To meet this provision and support the Council's economic growth ambitions, the RLDP will identify a deliverable range of employment land in attractive, accessible, and sustainable locations across Monmouthshire and in the right quantities to enable our existing businesses to grow.

Growing Monmouthshire's Future Economy : Economic Analysis

Figure 6.10 Proportion of businesses by turnover band

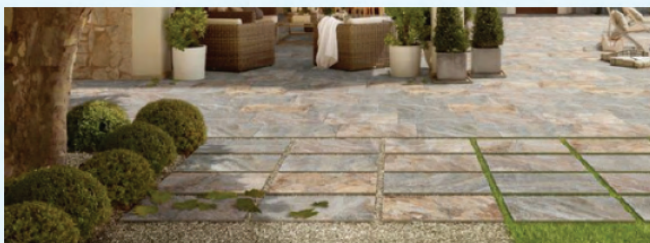


Source: ONS IDBR

MANDARIN STONE

Mandarin Stone CASE STUDY: Supporting sustainable growth

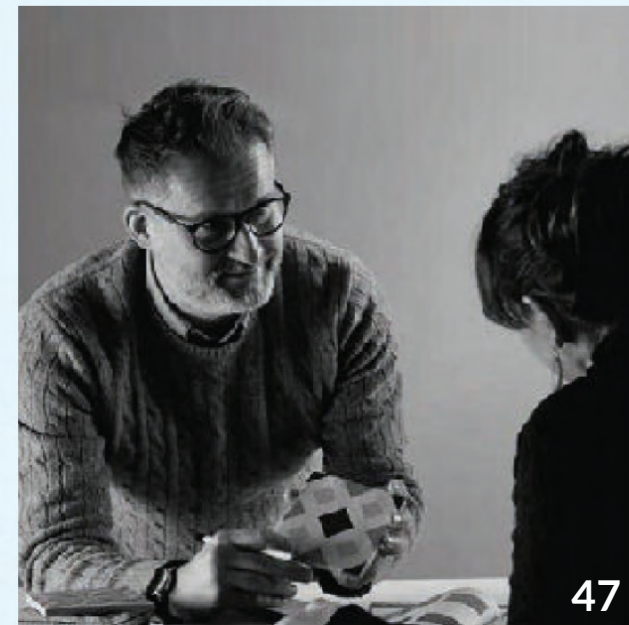
Mandarin Stone is a family owned and run business established in 1989 by Alma Small. Monmouthshire based for 30 years, Mandarin Stone initially operated from the Grange Mill site in Raglan before relocating to Monmouth in 1996. The business now operates from split sites (Wonastow and Hadnock Road) totalling just under 8 acres and comprising of head offices, a showroom and extensive warehousing.



Sourcing stone and porcelain tiles, slabs and external paving from over 12 countries and stocking some 450,000 square metres, Mandarin Stone has seen significant expansion over the years.

230 staff are now employed with 158 based in Monmouth. The remainder are positioned amongst 15 showrooms throughout the U.K.

Alma Small continues to be involved in the business today and has an unwavering passion not only for the product and business but for the staff too. Each employee plays a vital role and are equally valued. Staff retention is high and on occasion multiple generations of the same family are employed simultaneously.



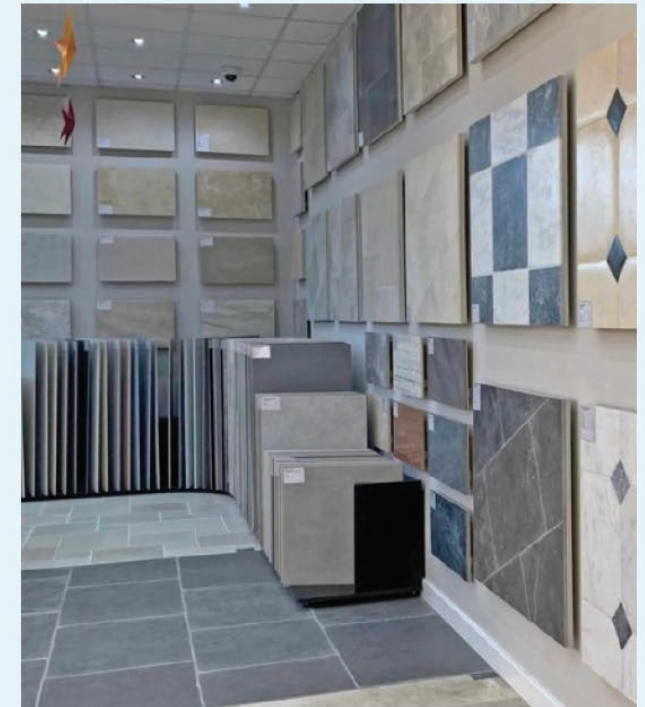
Mandarin Stone

Customer service is of utmost importance and much time is spent training and ensuring standards remain high. Sales staff assist with design schemes and also impart a huge amount of technical knowledge regarding substrate suitability. Fixing materials are produced in the UK and the recycling of materials is a key priority.

Our strong imagery, marketing, and online prowess mean that Mandarin Stone are at the forefront of design and innovation within the tile industry. We have an excellent UK wide reputation for quality of product and service working with a multitude of sectors including architects, interior designers, builders and home owners. A trade discount structure and diverse price range ensures all budgets are accommodated. Our fleet of 20 specialist off-load vehicles provide a safe and professional delivery service.

“Staff retention is high and on occasion multiple generations of the same family are employed simultaneously”

Mandarin Stone is a strong, principled business with a family ethos built on service and reputation. We continue to expand, employ and develop, opening our newest store in Harrogate at the end of November.



- **Finding our place in relation to regional growth opportunities**

Monmouthshire is a border county and clearly benefits from regional economic partnership working to maximise opportunities for sustainable employment and economic growth, increasing our investment prospects and showcasing best practice. We will continue to build strong relationships and networks identifying common purposes for collaboration including shared services where it is cost effective.

Our three key regional strategic economic partnerships – CCR City Deal, the Western Gateway and Marches Forward Partnership, all have a golden thread of increasing economic growth and productivity, supporting shared prosperity and wellbeing.

CCR specifically targets investments in skills, infrastructure, innovation-led scalable projects, businesses, and priority industry sectors, for example Compound Semi-Conductors and Med Tech.

As part of the Western Gateway, we will utilise the partnership to collaborate on partner-led opportunities, convene talent and expertise to give the best possible evidence and advocate and amplify the work of others.

Marches Forward Partnership will provide a flexible umbrella framework. We will focus on the economy and green growth with other shared interests to include transport, skills and housing alongside energy, climate change and digital connectivity. There is a shared ambition for rural based growth, identifying opportunities for strategic collaboration on agreed projects and initiatives in key sectors including tourism. It is aimed at supporting a shared understanding of 'life on the borders' as a focus for strategic joint working and to unlock additional investment into the area.

- **Increase uptake of support for people wishing to start or grow a business**

Monmouthshire benefits from high levels of self-employment with more than one in ten economically active residents being self-employed. The county also benefits from a strong entrepreneurial culture, evidenced by the high number of active businesses per resident, increasing business birth rates since 2016 and strong five-year business survival rates.

This offers the potential to increase the proportion of residents that succeed in starting and sustaining a business. We are developing a customer relationship management system that will enable us to strengthen our relationship with local businesses and ensure that they are aware of the range of support that is available and how they can access this.

- **Continue to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture**

Monmouthshire benefits from a strong entrepreneurial culture, as evidenced by the high number of active businesses per resident and increasing business birth rates since 2016. These are strengths that can be built upon.

The number of small businesses and healthy levels of enterprise creation clearly illustrate that Monmouthshire is attractive to innovative, business-focused people including some of which are semi-retired.

It is vital that this entrepreneurial culture is fostered to ensure that the county continues to develop and grow the businesses of the future and creates new employment opportunities that attract and retain younger people. We will continue to work with partner organisations to ensure that anyone aspiring to start or grow a business in Monmouthshire can access appropriate advice and support.

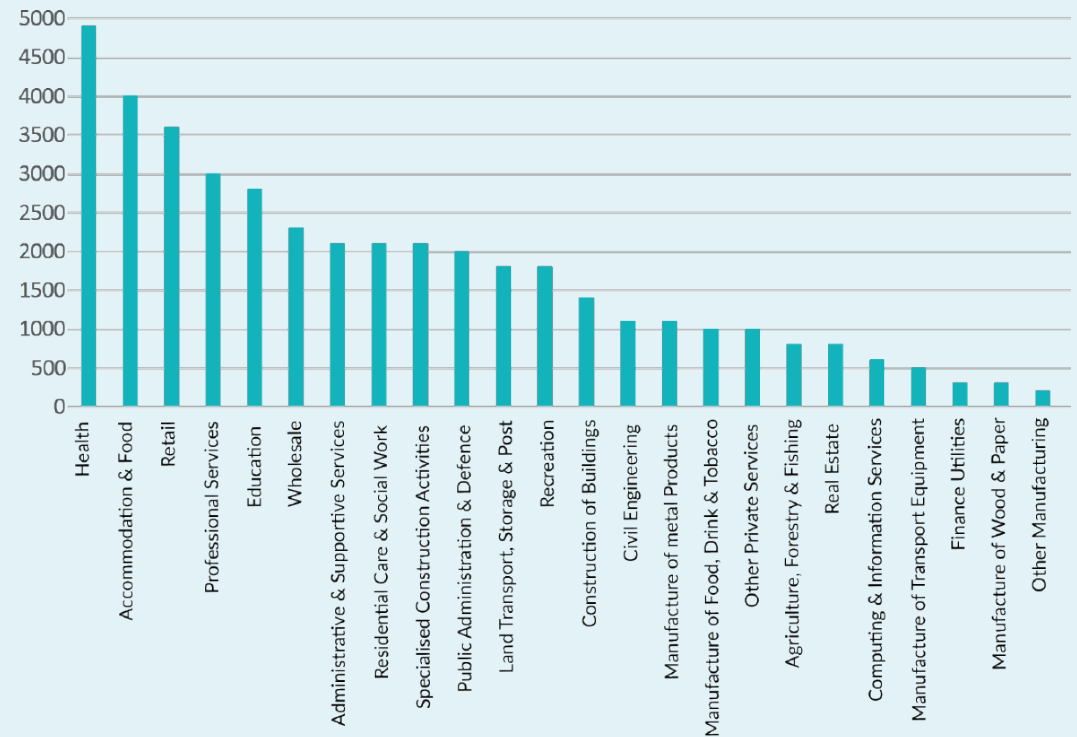
- **Encourage innovation and clustering in sectors**

Key Sectors

An understanding of the economy of Monmouthshire can be enhanced by considering key sectors that make the most significant contribution in terms of employment and economic output through Gross Value Added (GVA).

In 2022, there were a total of 41,700 jobs based in Monmouthshire. Experian data shows that the broad sectors of health (11.8%), accommodation & food (9.6%), retail (8.6%), and professional services (7.2%) are particularly significant in the county and account for 37.2% of total employment, compared to 30.8% in the CCR area and 31.9% in the former Bristol JSP (Joint Spatial Plan) area. Across the period to 2043, the largest projected growth in employment by sector is predicted in the healthcare sector, and the largest decline is predicted in wholesale.

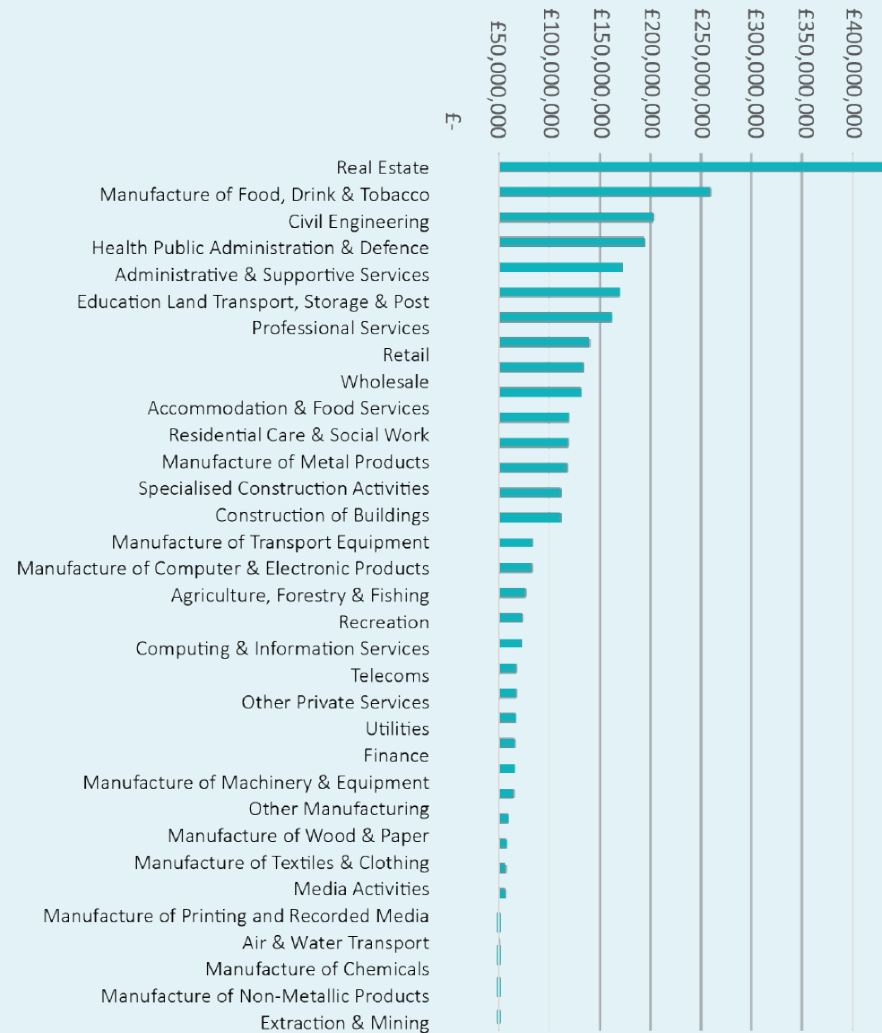
Figure 6.1 Employment by sector in Monmouthshire (2022)



Source: Lichfields analysis of Experian data (March 2022 data release)

GVA measures the economic output of each individual producer, industry, or sector. GVA data provided by Experian reveals a slightly different picture to the employment analysis presented above in terms of performance of key sectors. The GVA data for Monmouthshire indicates that real estate (18.2%), the manufacture of food & drink (10.0%), civil engineering (7.3%), health (6.9%), public administration (5.9%), administration & support services (5.7%), and education (5.3%) are the dominant sectors in terms of economic output. Collectively they account for over 59% of total GVA.

Analysis of Experian data shows that real estate, civil engineering, other manufacturing, transport equipment, and food and drink are projected to be the fastest growing sectors in terms of GVA per job from 2022 to 2043.



Source: Lichfields analysis of Experian data (March 2022 data release)



Cywain

Cywain Business Clusters

CASE STUDY: Encourage innovation and clustering

Cywain is a long-running programme funded by Welsh Government and delivered through Menter a Busnes to support Welsh food and drink businesses that have a desire to grow and innovate. The programme has developed a small suite of pan-Wales product-based clusters: the Honey Cluster, Seafood Cluster, and Fine Food Cluster. These focused groups bring different elements of the food chain together – from government to universities to businesses large and small – to share research and experience, make connections, and explore innovative approaches.

Representative activities include:

- Tailored mentoring programmes
- Events and workshops
- Understanding and entering new markets
- Access to world leading research
- Sharing costs / research



Cywain Business Clusters

Overall, the cluster model ‘provides a platform for ambitious Welsh food and drink businesses to identify and solve common problems together through knowledge sharing, training and by exploiting commercial opportunities collaboratively’. The Fine Food Cluster also involves an ‘internal market’ that encourages members both to trade with each other and to join forces and act co-operatively when buying or selling outside the cluster. Companies involved in the cluster have reported positively, for example: ‘I found it to be really really useful’ (Bluestone Brewing Co.), and ‘for the company, just networking, sharing good practice, listening to some keynote speakers who have really added to our strategy ... having these speakers and being able to liaise with them directly has really built the confidence of the company to try new markets and new routes to market’ (Calon Wen). [All quotes from [Cywain](#), 2023]



While Cywain’s clusters are based on particular products or types of products, place-based clusters can offer similar opportunities for sharing knowledge, building capacity and creating connections. A place-based cluster may be centred on a dedicated site, such as the food parks run by the Food & Drink Forum or the Agri-Tech Centre at Hartpury University or may develop organically as a loose association of like-minded people and enterprises who take advantage of geographical proximity to meet and collaborate informally.

‘I found it to be really really useful’

-Bluestone Brewing Co.



‘for the company, just networking, sharing good practice, listening to some keynote speakers who have really added to our strategy ... having these speakers and being able to liaise with them directly has really built the confidence of the company to try new markets and new routes to market’

-Calon Wen

Cardiff Capital Region has identified seven priority sectors where the region has comparative strengths and competitive advantages:

- Compound Semiconductors
- Fintech
- Cybersecurity & Analytics
- Creative Economy
- MedTech
- Transport
- Energy & Environment

We will work with regional partners and networks to develop innovation and clustering in sectors including food, creative industries, construction, and medtech to develop sustainable and inclusive growth in our county in driving a fairer, greener, and more successful economy. Through the Creative Industries Cluster Hub project, the MCC Heritage and Culture team will run a mapping exercise on the visual arts and the visual arts sector in Monmouthshire. Through events and interviews we are identifying and reaching out to artists, galleries and collectives throughout the county so we have a greater understanding of the needs and possibilities of that part of the sector and also inform our approaches to mapping, data collection and developing other creative industries in Monmouthshire.

Sector clustering will encourage creativity and innovation and increase efficiency and productivity, as stronger focus in this area will catapult Monmouthshire to a place where everyone is connected locally and globally.

- **Make public procurement spend more accessible**

We will deliver our services through a mixed economy, directly through our own workforce, and through public, private and third sector. As a result, the Council spends over £131 million a year procuring a diverse range of goods, services and works from over 2,800 suppliers and contractors.

We recognise the economic, social, environmental, and cultural value that can be generated by spending money with local businesses, small and micro enterprises, sole traders and the third sector.

In June 2023 Cabinet approved the “Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-2028”, that takes its focus from the Council’s Community & Corporate Plan 2022-2028, The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2022 along with the Procurement Act and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Amongst a number of competing priorities, the documents look to promote “place-based” procurement activity in an attempt to nurture resilient local supply chains.

To complement the strategy, a delivery plan has been developed with a number of key tasks that will be carried out in a timely manner and owned by a number of key business units across the Council. We will monitor progress at the relevant times.



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Raglan Dairy

CASE STUDY: Make public procurement spend more accessible

The Council had over the previous decades used a number of local and regional suppliers for the provision of fresh milk, with mixed results. In the majority of cases schools, leisure centres, residential homes and in the Council's headquarters would purchase from local milk suppliers in an uncoordinated and uncosted way.

2012 saw Welsh Government launch the "Wales Procurement Policy Statement", which for the first time set out a number of key principles by which public sector procurement needed to be delivered across Wales. With a wider understanding that, when used effectively, procurement can be a strategic lever to deliver economic benefit to the people of Wales.

Greater emphasis was now put on awarding public sector contracts that not only generated economies of scale and efficiency savings but also good quality outcomes that were of benefit to society, the economy and the environment, both now and in the future.

This then created the right environment for change, there was evidence to suggest that the Council had in excess of 20 suppliers of fresh milk, with very little in the way of checks and balances being put in place in relation to food health and safety, traceability and cost. In addition, there were no documented processes to follow in relation to poor performance or the development of new or scaled up local entrants into the supply chains.

The Council in 2015 working with the National Procurement Service for Wales (NPS) were very much focused on awarding contracts to suppliers that could provide assurances across a number of fronts that they had the capability and capacity to perform against a robust set of requirements and where possible were locally, regionally or nationally based across Wales.



Raglan Dairy

In 2016, all focus was on the recently awarded NPS "fresh and ambient food" collaborative framework, that had been divided into lots to ensure that Welsh and local SMEs had the opportunity to bid for contracts across the Welsh Public Sector. Integral to this was the soft market testing that was undertaken to promote the up coming opportunities and to better understand traditional and emerging entrants.

Given the scale and scope of fresh food across Wales, milk and dairy products was advertised as a lot on its own and was awarded to 4 suppliers, one of which was a local Monmouthshire supplier. Having familiarised ourselves with the rules that governed the framework we then made contact with Raglan Dairy with a set of clarification questions to establish if both organisations could develop a more binding commitment that would have the potential to create more employment within our local communities and keep more of our money within the county, whilst at the same time delivering economies of scale and efficiency savings and having the potential to reduce the Council's carbon footprint by substituting plastic cartons with traditional glass milk bottles.

Greater emphasis was now put on awarding public sector contracts that not only generated economies of scale and efficiency savings but also good quality outcomes, that were of benefit to society, the economy and the environment, both now and in the future.

Raglan Dairy were successful in being awarded this contract and still to this day remain the Council's primary supplier of fresh milk. The Council is still very much focused on the development and appointment of local, regional and national suppliers, as supported by the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2023-2028.



- **Foster a thriving local food economy**

From farm to fork we have a thriving local food economy with economic, social, and environmental benefits. The sector is key to the foundational and visitor economies, providing year-round and seasonal employment – both skilled and semi-skilled – in production, processing, retail, catering, and hospitality, as well as logistics, distribution, and other support services. A thriving local food economy benefits residents by promoting community cohesion, everyday personal interactions, and a sense of connection to land and place – all of which are likely to be perceived and appreciated by visitors too. Food and drink produced and consumed locally keep money circulating in the area, often between small independent enterprises, which builds diversity and resilience into the local economy.

Though local authorities have only a limited role in shaping commerce and individual shopping preferences, they do have some points of influence (e.g., destination management, planning, procurement). Within budgetary and regulatory constraints, we will strive to use that influence effectively to support local food enterprises and short supply chains in the private and public sectors. We will innovate and seek out examples of best practice from which we can learn, and where practical will support businesses, entrepreneurs, and other organisations trying to establish new enterprises or initiatives that will convincingly plug supply-chain gaps and/or offer new products and services in Monmouthshire and the surrounding area.



Hive Mind Mead

CASE STUDY: Foster a thriving local food economy

Hive Mind Mead & Brew Co. Established in 2018 by brothers Matt and Kit Newell.

Matt, while working at a geological company in Bristol, nurtured a growing love for beekeeping. His hives produced an abundance of honey that inspired us to embark on a remarkable journey. Meanwhile, Kit was a graphic and product designer for a tech company in Reading with a background in advertising and marketing. Our common dream was to return to the area in which we grew up, and we soon realised that to make that dream a reality, we had to create something unique and our own.

Our deep love for the natural world, coupled with a keen interest in brewing, led us to transform our honey into modern, contemporary sparkling mead. Our skill sets complemented each other perfectly, providing us with the foundation needed to build our own beverage brand.



Our journey began in Matt's garage, transformed into a micro-winery, in 2018, where we tested our concept. It became clear that others enjoyed our products, when we took a significant step forward by winning a 2 Star Great Taste Award for our inaugural 300L batch. With demand growing, we swiftly outgrew the garage and began cuckoo brewing at a local brewery in Chepstow, which was in the process of winding down. After renovating the premises once the existing brewery had relocated, we soon outgrew that space as well. This prompted us to move to a larger site in Caldicot one year later, expanding our beekeeping efforts, mead production, and introducing a range of honey-infused beers. We were also thrilled to unveil a taproom, creating a welcoming space for people to enjoy our creations.

Hive Mind Mead

During the challenging days of the COVID-19 lockdown, we adapted by swiftly transitioning to an online shop and delivering our products to local farm shops, delicatessens, and garden centres. A fortuitous appearance on BBC Countryfile provided a substantial boost to our reach. We used this time to enhance our brewing operations and design a range of honey-infused beers, including our flagship Traditional Mead, which showcases the exceptional local honey.

Our journey took an exciting turn as we featured on multiple TV shows, such as Kate Humble's Escape to the Farm, BBC Farmers Country Showdown, The Hairy Bikers Go Local, Coast & Country, and more. This exposure helped reintroduce this historical drink albeit with a modern twist, which had been somewhat forgotten. Our products continued to earn accolades, with a 3 Star Great Taste Award in 2022 for our Smoked Honey Porter and another 3 Star for our Traditional Mead in 2023, ultimately winning the Golden Fork Award for Wales.

“We are now the direct suppliers to over 150 independent shops and have established partnerships with six distributors to reach retailers across the UK”

Mead is an environmentally friendly and sustainable beverage crafted from three core ingredients - water, honey, and yeast, and can be made with ingredients on the doorstep of our meadery. Today, we oversee more than 180 hives of bees in the picturesque lower Wye Valley, transforming their precious honey into innovative sparkling meads and traditional wine-style meads. These creations are not only enjoyed by individuals as they are but also serve as essential ingredients or pairing drinks in two Michelin-starred restaurants, or cocktail ingredients. Our sparkling mead is a nod to the craft mead renaissance in the United States, challenging the typically historically-styled versions of the world's oldest beverage found in the UK and bringing it into the modern era.



We are now the direct suppliers to over 150 independent shops and have established partnerships with six distributors to reach retailers across the UK. Our Traditional and Whiskey Barrel Aged meads caught the eye of Selfridges' buyer during a visit to the Wye Valley and are now found on the shelves of their London and Manchester stores. As we explore international markets, we're thrilled to share that our first overseas order is set to reach Hong Kong in the coming weeks.

Our growth has been accompanied by the addition of three dedicated team members, and we are actively planning further expansions to meet the demands of larger markets. The journey has been marked by a steep learning curve, as neither of us initially had backgrounds in business, food production, or sales. However, with several years of relentless dedication, 80-hour workweeks, and unwavering commitment, we've come to understand the extraordinary possibilities that emerge from sheer determination and a love for what we do.



KEY PRIORITY THEME FOUR

Infrastructure: A well-connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment



Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales, the southwest of England and the Midlands. Whilst the county is easily accessible via several strategic routes Monmouthshire is constrained by its poor public transport connections, both within the county and with its neighbouring authorities. Whilst there are four railway stations providing rail links to the UK's key settlements, poor bus connections contribute to the issues facing businesses seeking to expand in Monmouthshire must rely on workers living locally or having reliable access to a car.

From an economic infrastructure perspective, the county has a very low vacancy rate for office premises at 0.3%, for industrial premises this drops to just 0.1%. Whilst on the face of it this may appear positive, this lack of developed space for economic activity is a significant constraint on the further development of the county, emphasising the need to make additional space available.

In terms of digital connectivity, the latest Open Market Review undertaken by Welsh Government, identified a significantly improved picture for the deployment of broadband infrastructure in the county, indicating that if broadband provider plans are delivered, as planned, at least 81.6% of premises in Monmouthshire should have access to gigabit-capable broadband from at least one provider within the next three years, compared to 46.8% across Wales. However, there are still pockets of digital deprivation in our deep rural areas which are home to many of our micro businesses.

Key Objectives

- **Inform the use and distribution of employment land and premises**

The RLDP makes provision for a minimum of 38ha of employment land for B uses classes (B1, B2 and B8) over the Plan period (2018-2033). To meet this provision and support the Council's economic growth ambitions, the RLDP will identify a deliverable range of employment land in attractive, accessible, and sustainable locations across Monmouthshire and in the right quantities to attract new businesses in key growth sectors and to enable our existing businesses to grow, whilst being flexible to future changes. It is recognised that there is an increased propensity for agile and home working in some sectors over the longer term, meaning demand for physical employment land or space is changing. Furthermore, while the RLDP will make provision for B use class employment land, not all the job's growth will be in these use classes. Many jobs will be delivered through foundational sectors such as tourism, leisure, food, retail, and agriculture, all of which play an important role in Monmouthshire's economy. The RLDP will plan positively for these sectors through complementary supportive policies.

Taking account of the recommendations of the Employment Land Review Update (November 2022), expected future demand and the need to grow employment in Monmouthshire, this Economy, Employment & Skills Strategy proposes the following provision for B use classes in Monmouthshire:

Locality	Area	Type of units required	Use Class
North Monmouthshire			
Including Abergavenny, Raglan and Monmouthshire	13 Ha	Small/starter units, flexible grow-on space, larger units	B1/B2/B8
South Monmouthshire			
Including Chepstow, Caldicot, Crick, Caerwent, Magor	25 Ha	Small/starter units, flexible grow-on space, larger units	B1/B2/B8
Total	38 Ha		

A number of candidate sites have been submitted that offer potential to be considered for allocation in the emerging Deposit RLDP to assist in meeting this demand including: Land east of A465, Abergavenny; Land west of Raglan; Land at Raglan Enterprise Park; Land north of Wonastow Road, Monmouth; Rhossili, Hadnock Road, Monmouth; Land south of Junction 2 M48, Chepstow; Land at former MoD Training Centre, Caerwent; Land at Bradbury Farm, Crick; Quaypoint, Magor; Land to the west of Wales One Business Park, Magor. These sites will be subject to further assessment as the RLDP progresses

- **Explore the Council's role in the delivery of employment floorspace**

The Council benefits from a diverse land and property portfolio which presents opportunities to derive commercial return and facilitate economic development. As managers of the portfolio, our Landlord Services team will continue to explore the options to support the development of new employment space through its existing property portfolios, as well as the letting of existing vacant space that can assist all scales of business growth within Monmouthshire. The investment portfolio includes industrial, office and retail space that present opportunities to improve existing commercial assets and to invest and develop new space with prospective partners and funding providers.

The Council will contribute towards the delivery of new employment space via their existing Local Development Plan allocated mixed use development sites, where there is a requirement for B1 Use Class Light Industrial and Office space. In addition, our Estates Development team will assist future delivery by seeking new employment space through the promotion of its candidate sites in the RLDP. This aligns with the commitment of the proposed Asset Management Strategy, the purposes of which include maximising commercial opportunities within the estate and utilising Council assets and/or acquiring property to support policy objectives including supporting thriving economies and communities.

- **Support improvements in digital connectivity**

The ability to access broadband is an imperative for many citizens, particularly in terms of their ability to work from home to reduce their carbon impact and equally for local businesses wishing to trade or expand. Whilst the latest data indicates a positive picture for Monmouthshire with at least 81.6% of premises predicted to have access to gigabit-capable broadband from at least one provider within the next three years, compared to 46.8% across Wales, we cannot be complacent.

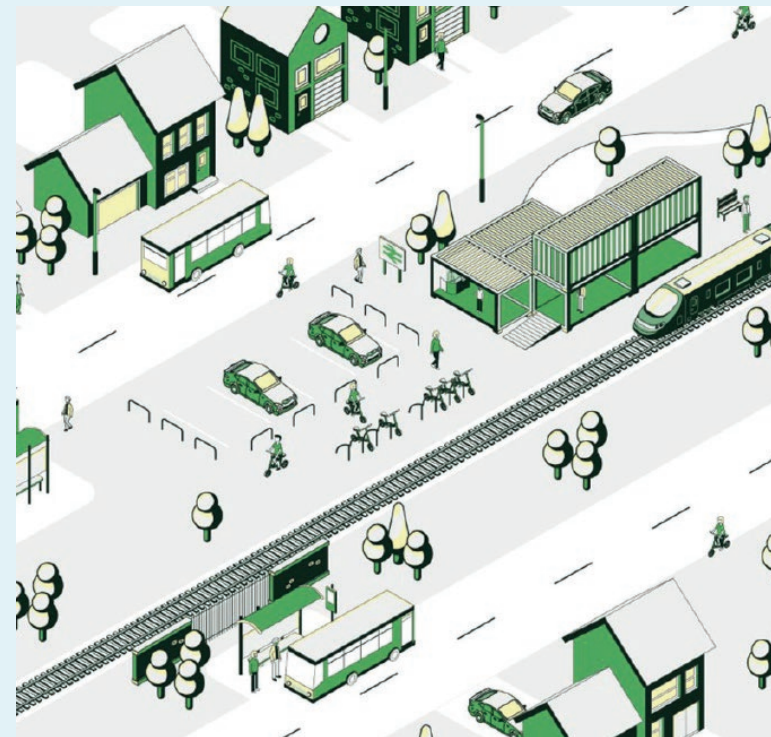
‘Rolling out’ improved broadband connectivity, whether in rural or urban settings, is a complicated process with many (often hidden) barriers, such as securing the necessary permissions from landowners to access land or install/replace infrastructure and needing to use historic infrastructure such as ducts or telephone poles that sometimes need prior maintenance or replacement.

Further work will therefore continue with broadband providers to identify potential solutions for those that remain at risk of being left behind. This activity will include assisting broadband providers in their rollout plans as appropriate, facilitating conversations with the community as needed, and pursuing opportunities for new technology test beds such as 5G, as they become available.

- **Support a sustainable transport system that contributes to our economic ambition and the vision of the Local Transport Plan**

Monmouthshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) establishes a strategic framework for the future development of the transport network across Monmouthshire for the next five years and beyond. The vision of the LTP is for: An integrated transport and land use system that prioritises sustainable travel, enables transition to a zero-carbon county, and supports well-being, health, and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

The LTP aligns with the shared vision and priority objectives of Llwybr Newydd, the Welsh Transport Strategy, against which all proposed interventions have been assessed. It considers the local context, supports a healthy and balanced economy, social inclusion, and equality, and aims to reduce the environmental impact of the transport system. It supports the Council's Corporate and Community Plan, and Place Making Strategies, the RLDP, and this Strategy.



The LTP contains twelve focus areas and includes an ambition statement for each with associated interventions:

- Land Use Planning
- Digital Connectivity
- Freight and Logistics
- Mobility Hubs & Interchanges
- Active Travel
- Bus
- Rail
- Community & On-demand Services
- Behaviour Change & Information
- EV Charging Infrastructure
- Roads, Streets and Parking
- Home to School Transport

For example, Active Travel will provide the infrastructure, insight, and motivation to provide sustainable travel for walking and cycling across Monmouthshire, increasing modal shift. Engagement with key services and stakeholders, both internally and externally to Monmouthshire, enables us to have a clear picture for developing future sustainable transport opportunities. Maximise core and grant Active Travel Funding to develop new and improved routes to encourage modal shift in line with our Active Travel Network Map aspirations.

The LTP contains two delivery plans: Firstly, an implementation plan which looks at the schemes in each focus area that have been fully appraised, and which are the key focus for delivery in this period. Then an action plan for the schemes to continue, support and review categories for each focus area, including the high-level indication of well-being outcomes, cost bandings, deliverability considerations and timescale estimates.

- **Attract investment from larger high value enterprises**

The creation of sustainable job opportunities in Monmouthshire is crucial in order to re-balance the demographic profile of the county and reduce levels of out-commuting. The RLDP identifies a level of growth that aims to provide an appropriate balance of household and jobs growth. Whilst some of the jobs growth will come from existing local businesses, the county would also benefit from attracting businesses that can benefit from what Monmouthshire has to offer and which are looking to create higher paying jobs in a range of sectors. We will therefore continue to raise the profile of Monmouthshire as a key investment opportunity for the private sector in order to increase the number of businesses relocating to Monmouthshire.



Action Plan



Place

A vibrant,
greener
Monmouthshire

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire	Promote the competitiveness and diversity of our economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver a communication and marketing plan promoting Monmouthshire as an investment opportunity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and marketing plan developed. Number of new enquiries received. 	October 2024 Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills Team
	Support the vitality of our town centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek the investment to implement the existing placemaking plans in Caldicot, Usk, Wye Valley Villages and Chepstow. Work with local people to create Placemaking Plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny, and Magor. Work with property owners and landlords to minimise town centre vacancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of new placemaking plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny, and Magor. Town centre footfall. Percentage of vacant town centre premises. 	May 2028 Annually Annually	Community & Corporate Plan	Placemaking, Highways and Flood Team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire	Support transition towards net zero and protect our environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an EVCI strategy for the County which will increase the availability of charging infrastructure, to support the switch to low emissions vehicles. • Continue to deliver an accredited Carbon Literacy programme for businesses, residents, and community leaders to empower change. • Set up and promote webpage to provide signposting to support and advice on energy efficiency and decarbonisation for businesses. • Identify and develop the skills needed by industries of the future including green jobs/apprenticeships, working with the Regional Skills Partnership. • Engage with local businesses in the development and delivery of the Local Area Energy Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of publicly available EV charging points in Monmouthshire. • Number of businesses received training in Carbon Literacy. • Number of visits to website page / references to support and advice. 	<p>May 2028 Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p>	<p>Corporate & Community Plan</p> <p>Climate Emergency Strategy</p>	<p>Decarbonisation Team;</p> <p>Economy, Employment and Skills Team;</p> <p>Climate and Sustainability Policy Team</p>

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire	Support rural diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with partners, facilitate knowledge exchange and transfer to increase local understanding and adoption of sustainable and regenerative farming practices. • Offer networking, signposting and, where appropriate, grant funding opportunities to support rural diversification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of farming businesses supported. • Number of people attending agricultural practices training sessions. • Number of rural decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support. • Number of businesses adopting new to firm processes or technologies as a result of support. 	March 2025 Annually Annually Annually Annually	Community and Corporate Plan	Food Sustainability Team Economy, Employment and Skills Team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Place: A vibrant, greener Monmouthshire	Enhance the experience of visitors and deliver sustainable growth in our tourism economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage Monmouthshire's Destination Partnership. • Explore partnership opportunities to enable a future review of Monmouthshire's 2017-2020 Destination Management Plan. • Management of externally funded projects to deliver destination improvements and marketing. • Develop, deliver, and monitor annual Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Southern Wales Destination Marketing Plans to achieve agreed growth targets and distribute benefits more evenly across year and destination. • Manage and share destination intelligence to inform destination management decisions and strategy. • Develop & deliver tailored business support to visitor economy businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of partners attended Annual meetings of Destination Partnership. • Opportunity to review Monmouthshire's Destination Management Plan found. • Amount of funding claimed for destination improvements. • Specific destination improvements delivered. • Monitoring of Marketing KPIs. • STEAM volume, value & FTE figures in peak and off-peak periods. • Annual update of Monmouthshire bed stock databases completed. • Number of decisions informed by destination intelligence. • Visitor economy business satisfaction survey completed. • Number of businesses supported. 	Annually March 2024 March 2025 March 2025 Annually Annually Annually Annually Annually		MonLife

Action Plan



People

A fairer,
more successful
Monmouthshire

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire	Support a balanced change in the demographic profile of our county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a range and choice of homes that enable a younger population to both live and work within Monmouthshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of affordable homes approved per annum. Number of entry level market homes approved per annum (1, 2 and 3 bed homes). 	2033 Annually	Replacement Local Development Plan	Placemaking, Planning & Flood Team
	Support the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate a sufficient supply of employment land and protect the County's employment land*. Provide support for the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net employment land supply*. Take-up of employment land*. Amount of employment land lost to non-employment uses (i.e., non-B1, B2, B8 uses). Proportion of economically active population. Number of working age people supported into employment through action by the local authority. 	2033 Annually Annually Annually Annually	Replacement Local Development Plan	Placemaking, Highways and Flood Team Economy, Employment & Skills Team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire	Equip people with skills and qualifications to enter employment, enable employment progression and explore a Skills Centre in Monmouthshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance delivery of employability programmes and build partnership with employers and local businesses. Provide support to move economically inactive residents closer to the labour market. Set up a local skills task and finish group to review results of skills gap analysis. Explore the feasibility of a Skills Centre in Monmouthshire with businesses, further and higher education partners and training providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of qualifications gained. Number of people with improved skills. Number of local businesses engaged. Number of economically inactive residents engaged who have been out of work for over 18 months. Skills gap analysis with local businesses and employers completed. Number of businesses, further and higher education partners and training providers engaged. 	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>March 2025</p>		Economy, Employment & Skills team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
People: A fairer, more successful Monmouthshire	Collaborate with comprehensive schools, further and higher education partners to enhance access and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a broader 14-19 offer including more collaboration between comprehensive schools and further education partners. Create more equitable availability of Level 3 general courses by developing a Monmouthshire E-sgol learning network. Develop a broader educational offer to include both academic and vocational pathways for post 16 learners through a suite of publicly funded Level 2 post 16 vocational qualifications that provide a direct, post Sixth Form, route into employment or further Level 3 study if desired. Work based learning, which is integral to all qualifications, will be provided by MCC or other work-based partners. Work with Coleg Gwent to broaden their Level 1 and 2 offer at the Usk Campus. Working with local businesses and schools to enhance apprenticeship opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Level 3 general course available to post 16 learners 2023-24. The number of Monmouthshire learners following E-sgol courses has increased from 2022-23. Number of Pathways to Employment programmes available to learners. Number of learners registering for courses. Work based learning partners confirmed for September 2024. Increased Level 1 and 2 provision. Number of schools and business engagement. Number of residents taking up apprenticeship opportunities in the county. Number of businesses offering apprenticeship opportunities, in particular STEMs. 	<p>September 2023-24</p> <p>September 2023-24</p> <p>December 2023</p> <p>Feb 2024 & Sept 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p>		<p>Sustainable Schools Education Advisor</p> <p>Economy, Employment & Skills Team</p>

Action Plan



Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire	Support the sustainable growth of existing businesses including our larger businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Business support is targeted to meet the needs of existing and larger businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of existing businesses supported. 	March 2025 Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills team
	Find our place in relation to regional growth sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a participative strategic, economic partner, unlocking additional investment into the county and region, accelerating economic growth and productivity. Build strong relationships and networks, identifying joint approaches or sharing services where it is cost effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of investment attracted. No. of joint approaches instigated. 	March 2025 Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills team
	Increase uptake of support for people wishing to start or grow a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communications and marketing plan to raise awareness of the support provided by Business Monmouthshire and partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new and existing businesses supported. 	March 2025 Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire	Continue to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to those exploring self-employment, to enable them to progress their aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new businesses started. Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready. 	March 2025 Annually March 2025 Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills team
	Encourage innovation and clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with regional partners and networks to develop innovation and clustering in sectors such as food, advanced manufacturing, construction, and MedTech. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new clusters developed. 	March 2025		Economy, Employment & Skills team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire	Make public procurement spend more accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update key systems to allow reporting on the number of local businesses bidding for and winning Council contracts. Review and update standard tender documentation to ensure it encourages both staff and our suppliers and contractors to buy locally and where appropriate make it a requirement for contractors to advertise supply chain opportunities through Sell2Wales and to hold Meet the Buyer Events. Undertake an analysis of spend data to better understand where there are supply voids and opportunities to increase use of local supply. Undertake a survey of local businesses and third sector to understand barriers to doing business with the Council. Engage with partners such as Business Wales, Business in Focus and South Wales Chamber of Commerce to improve the skills of local SMEs to access public sector business opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to be able to identify local tier 1 spend and spend generated across the supply chain. Increase in the number of tenders that are advertised locally. Increase in the percentage of local spend being awarded. Data that identifies categories of spend that are procured outside of our County, Cardiff Capital Region, Wales, and our bordering English counties. Targeted communications to businesses within the locality to identify where opportunities may exist. Increase in the number of local businesses that are accessing and securing Council contracts. 	<p>2028</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy	Procurement Team, Economy, Employment & Skills Team

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Enterprise: A thriving, ambitious Monmouthshire	Foster a thriving local food economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners, promote local food businesses to residents and visitors. Encourage new trading relationships between local food enterprises. Offer networking, signposting and, where appropriate, grant funding opportunities to support local food and drink businesses and entrepreneurs. Work with key supply-chain partners to increase the amount of local or UK produce available to MCC settings. Explore the feasibility and desirability of investment in key supply-chain infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of events and/or information dissemination activities to promote local food businesses. Number of enterprises supported. Number of potential entrepreneurs supported. Number of local trading relationships established. Amount of local or UK produce served in MCC settings. 	<p>March 2025</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p>		Food Sustainability Team

Action Plan



Infrastructure

A well connected
Monmouthshire
attracting business
investment

*Relates to B Use Classes

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Infrastructure: A well-connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment	Inform the use and distribution of employment land and premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RLDP will allocate a sufficient supply of employment land and protect the County's employment land*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net employment land supply*. Take-up of employment land*. (*Relates to B Use Classes) Amount of employment land lost to non-employment uses (i.e. non-B1, B2, B8 uses). 	2033 Annually Annually Annually	Replacement Local Development Plan	Placemaking, Highways and Flood Team
	Explore the Council's role in the delivery of employment floorspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to advertise and promote opportunities for employment or job creation across MCC's investment portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of new lettings aligned with this objective. 	Annually		Estates and Sustainability Team
	Support improvements in digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist broadband providers in their rollout plans to reduce digital deprivation in the county. Pursue opportunities for the deployment of new technology test beds such as 5G. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of Monmouthshire premises with access to gigabit-capable broadband. No. of new connectivity projects participated in. 	March 2025		Head of Community Enterprise and Animation

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
<p>Infrastructure: A well-connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment</p>	<p>A sustainable transport system that contributes to our economic ambitions and vision of the Local Transport Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the local transport plan. • Work with neighbouring authorities to improve transport infrastructure which reduces congestion and to improve connectivity and sustainable transport options. • Ensure town centres are accessible via active travel by developing routes up to 3 miles with a focus on travel to; schools, town centres, key employment sites, bus, and rail stations. • Maintain a sustainable and accessible public bus network (including community transport) that serves our town centres. • Work with partners to invest in better bus infrastructure and increase the frequency of the buses that link our towns with neighbouring villages. • Work with partners to enhance the local railway system including the development of a new station at Magor, improvements at Severn Tunnel Junction and Abergavenny to improve access and usage. • Work with partners to increase the frequency of train services, creating plans for a metro that links Monmouthshire to Bristol, Newport, and Cardiff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver measures in the Local Transport Plan. • Number of active travel routes created or enhanced. • Number of buses to/from town centres. • Number of bus stops with flags, timetables & shelters. • Number of bus passengers. • Number of bus services at railway stations. • Number of people using Monmouthshire towns centre railway stations. 	<p>May 2028</p>	<p>Community & Corporate Plan</p> <p>Draft Local Transport Plan</p>	<p>Passenger Transport Planning Team / Active Travel Team / Highways team</p>

Action Plan

Theme	Objective	The action we will take	How we will measure progress	Target date	Also cited within	Owner
Infrastructure: A well-connected Monmouthshire attracting business investment	Attract investment from larger high value enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver a communication and marketing plan promoting Monmouthshire as an investment opportunity. • Working with Welsh, Government and Cardiff Capital Region to identify opportunities to attract investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new inquiries received in response to communication and marketing activity. 	Annually		Economy, Employment & Skills Team