

The Case for Restoring a Caerleon Station



TRACS

Towards Restoring a Caerleon Station 2026

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The Case for Restoring a Caerleon Station

Promoting Heritage Access, Reducing Traffic Congestion and Supporting Sustainable Growth

1. Executive Summary

Caerleon is one of the most historically significant towns in Wales and the wider United Kingdom, internationally recognised for its exceptional concentration of Roman heritage assets. 2024 saw the creation of a formal partnership between Newport City Council, Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru¹. Caerllion Rufeinig- Porth i Bartneriaeth, The Roman Caerleon Gateway Partnership, aims to maximise Caerleon as a heritage destination for both visitors and the local community. Despite this importance, Caerleon currently lacks a railway station and is heavily dependent on car-based access. This, together with a major increase in population, has resulted in chronic congestion, pressure on a sensitive historic environment and long-standing air quality issues within the town centre.

This report brings together transport, heritage, economic, environmental, and community evidence to present a single, coherent case for re-establishing Caerleon Railway Station. It demonstrates that the station is not simply a transport intervention, but a heritage-led regeneration and sustainable tourism project that would:

- Provide sustainable access to internationally important Roman heritage assets
- Reduce traffic congestion and vehicle emissions in Caerleon's historic core
- Contribute towards a reduction in congestion along the main travel corridors into Cardiff and Newport e.g. along the M4 and A4042 corridors²
- Support heritage tourism growth and local economic vitality
- Improve access to employment, education, and services
- Align strongly with Welsh Government transport, climate, heritage, and well-being policy.

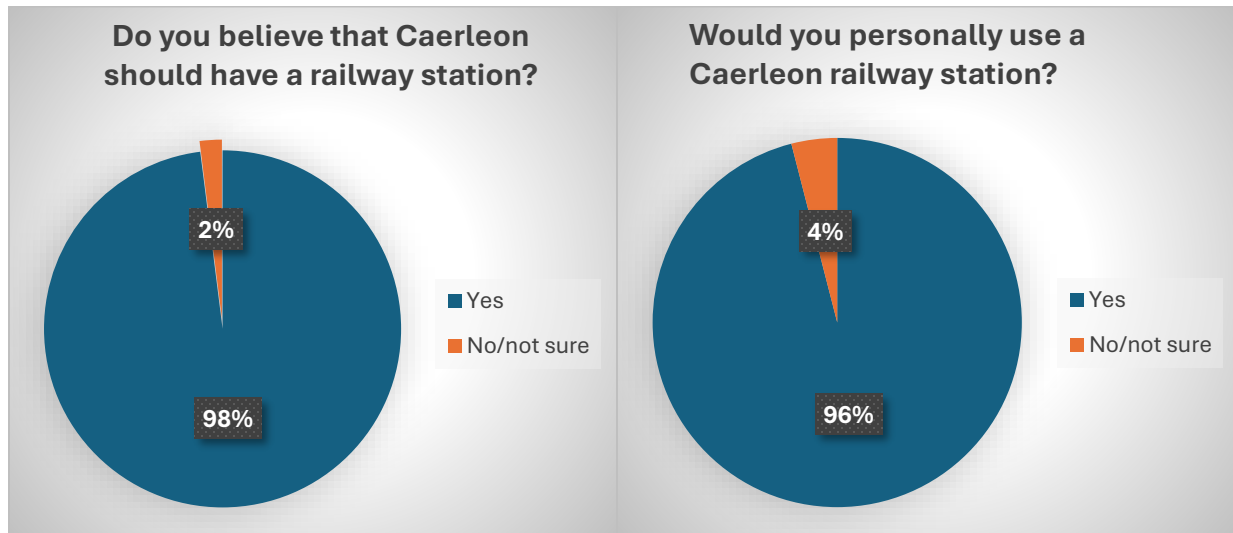
The case is structured to support progression into formal appraisal and funding stages and is suitable for consideration by Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, Newport City Council, Railtrack, Cadw, and funding bodies.

A 2025 survey of 1,920 local residents by the rail group Towards Restoring a Caerleon Station (TRACS) showed overwhelming support and clear patterns of intended use for a

¹ [£250,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help transform Roman Caerleon | GOV.WALES](#)

² Abergavenny - Newport Rail Corridor Option Development & Appraisal Final WelTAG Report - March 2011, page 37

reopened Caerleon station. 98 percent of respondents believed Caerleon should have a railway station and 96% stated they would personally use it if reopened.



2. Purpose and Vision

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to consolidate existing work, research and policy analysis into a single strategic document that clearly sets out:

- Why Caerleon needs a railway station
- How a station supports heritage protection and access
- How rail can reduce traffic and air quality impacts
- The economic, social, and environmental value of the proposal
- A clear pathway for delivery.

2.2 Vision

To create a rail-connected, heritage-led gateway to Caerleon that protects its Roman legacy, reduces car dependency and supports a thriving, accessible and sustainable town.

3. Strategic Context

3.1 Caerleon's Heritage Importance

Caerleon (Isca Augusta) was one of only three permanent Roman legionary fortresses in Britain. The town contains:

- The Roman Amphitheatre; the only complete example in the UK
- Roman Barracks; the only excavated example in Europe
- Roman Baths
- The National Roman Legion Museum
- Extensive buried archaeology integrated within the modern settlement.

Together, these assets form one of Wales's most important heritage destinations, attracting domestic and international visitors, school groups, researchers and cultural events.



The amphitheatre Caerleon; the only remains of a complete Roman amphitheatre in the UK

3.2 Current Transport Context

Despite its importance, Caerleon is currently accessed primarily by:

- Private car via a constrained historic road network
- Bus services that are subject to congestion and unreliable journey times

There is no direct rail access, creating a mismatch between national heritage status and sustainable transport provision.

4. The Heritage Case for Re-establishing the Station

4.1 Heritage Access and Visitor Demand

Caerleon's Roman sites attract significant visitor numbers, but car-based access undermines both the heritage setting and the visitor experience. Congestion, parking pressure and traffic dominance detract from the sense of place and limit Caerleon's ability to grow as a high-quality heritage destination. An appraisal of 2019 identified the heavy concentration of traffic around the one-way system as a principal detracting feature of the Caerleon conservation area.³ An Amgueddfa Cymru report of 2017 clearly identified traffic as an obstacle to Caerleon's development as a heritage destination⁴. A reopened station would not only serve daily travel needs but also underpin car-free visits to Caerleon's Roman sites, museums, and events, aligning transport provision with the town's role as a major heritage destination.

Rail access would provide a sustainable and inclusive gateway to Roman Caerleon, supporting:

- Car-free heritage visits
- School and educational travel
- International tourism via regional rail connections
- The work of the Caerleon heritage partnership.

4.2 Protecting the Historic Environment

Traffic impacts within Caerleon include:

- Vibration risks to numerous historic buildings within the conservation area
- Elevated air pollution
- Noise and visual intrusion within the historic core
- Safety issues for pedestrians and school groups.

A railway station would reduce reliance on cars and coaches, directly supporting heritage conservation objectives.

4.3 Alignment with Cadw and Heritage Policy

Cadw's statutory role prioritises the protection of Scheduled Monuments and their settings. Transport interventions that reduce traffic, air pollution and vibration within Caerleon align closely with these duties. A sensitively designed station, supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment, is consistent with heritage-led regeneration principles.

³ Caerleon; conservation area appraisal, Newport Council, 2019

⁴ Review of Amgueddfa Cymru, Dr Simon Thurley, 2017.

5. Traffic Congestion and Air Quality

5.1 Congestion in the Historic Core

Caerleon's historic street pattern, combined with the geographical constraints on surrounding roads, make the town inherently unsuited to modern traffic volumes. A survey in 2021 measured the Monday to Friday daily average of vehicles passing through Caerleon as 11310⁵. The one-way system operates as a bottleneck for:

- Residents
- Visitors
- Buses and service vehicles
- Emergency access

Congestion is most acute during peak commuting periods.



High Street Caerleon; peak time gridlock at school closure

5.2 Air Quality Management Area

The Caerleon High Street AQMA reflects historic exceedances of nitrogen dioxide caused primarily by road traffic. The traffic survey conducted in 2021 counted 5721 vehicles in one day passing Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary School, with a peak of 442 vehicles

⁵ A survey by AECOM. Data conducted 24 February to 2 March 2021. With COVID now much further in the past, this number of vehicles is now likely to be greater.

passing the school between 8.00am and 9.00am.⁶ Although recent improvements in levels of pollution have been recorded, long-term compliance is vulnerable without structural changes to travel behaviour.

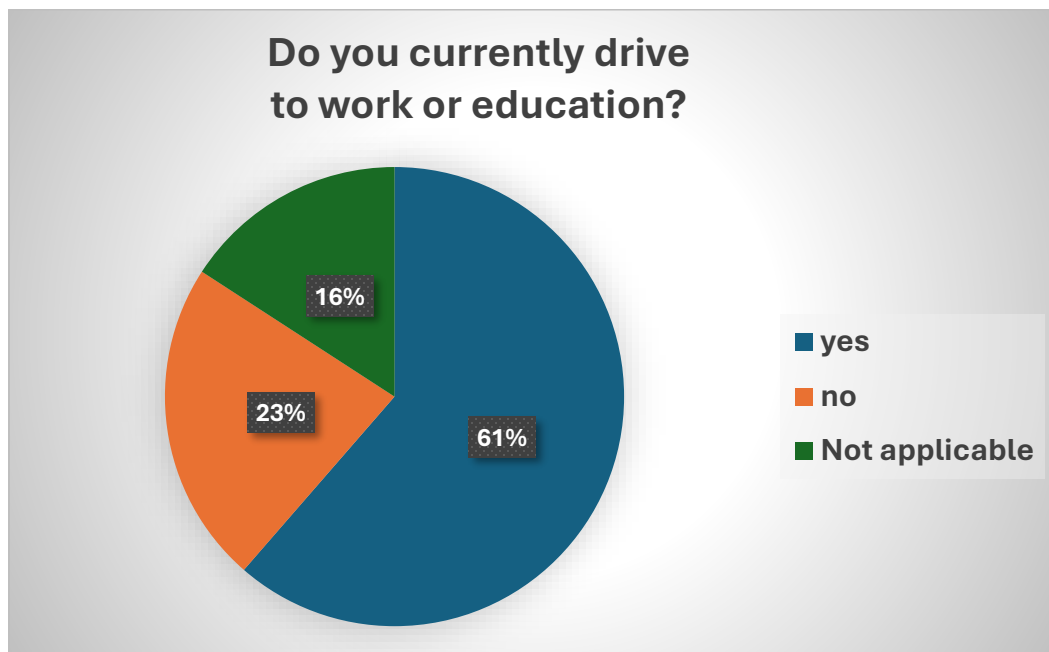
5.3 Rail as a Traffic Reduction Measure

A railway station enables:

- Modal shift for commuters to Newport, Cardiff, Bristol and beyond
- Rail-based tourism and school visits
- Reduced coach traffic entering the town centre.

Even small reductions in traffic volumes (5–10%) can deliver disproportionate benefits in constrained historic environments.

The WelTAG report of 2011⁷ stated that, “a new station in Caerleon could greatly contribute to the reduction in cars travelling along key travel corridors into Cardiff and Newport by providing a viable sustainable travel alternative to the private car for commuter, leisure and tourism trips.” The TRACS survey⁸ confirmed the scale of car dependency that a station could help address. Sixty-two percent of respondents currently drive to work or education, with the

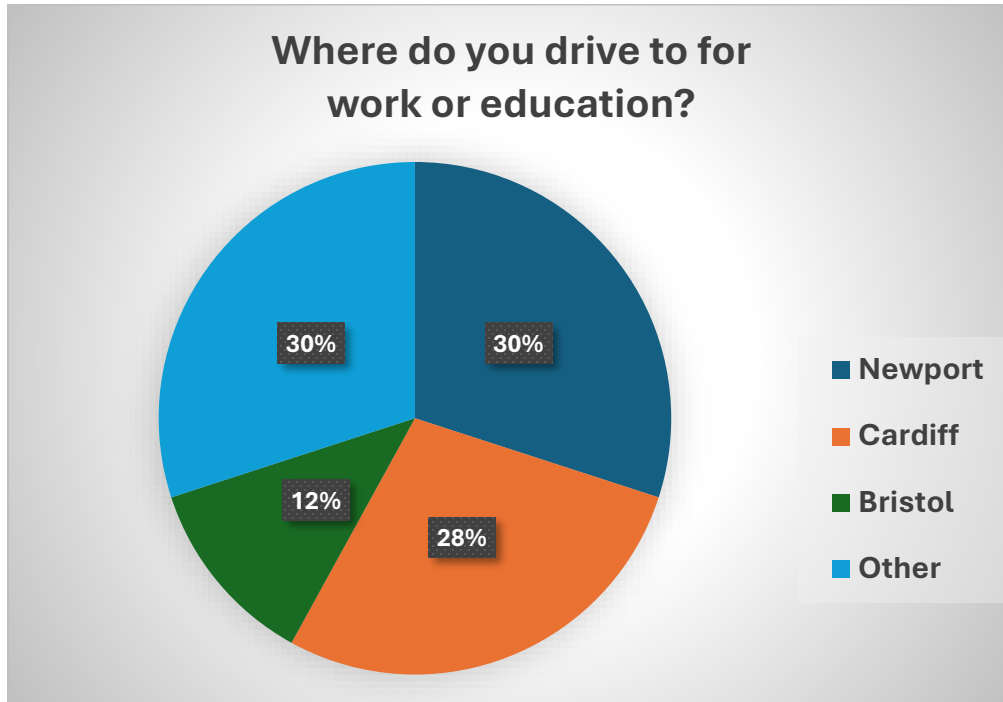


⁶ A survey by AECOM. Data conducted 25 February 2021. With COVID now much further in the past, this number of vehicles is now likely to be greater.

⁷ Abergavenny- Newport Rail Corridor, Option Development and Appraisal, WelTAG Report- March 2011.

⁸ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

main destinations being Newport (30%), Cardiff (28%), and Bristol (12%). These are precisely the corridors served by the existing rail network.



6. Sustainable Tourism and Visitor Economy

6.1 Rail-Enabled Visitor Growth

Evidence from comparable heritage destinations shows that rail-connected towns experience:

- Increased visitor numbers
- Longer dwell times.
- Higher per-visit spending

Rail visitors are more likely to explore on foot and engage with local businesses⁹.

6.2 A Heritage Arrival Experience

The station provides an opportunity to support the heritage partnership and create a distinctive heritage gateway through:

⁹ Unlocking the Economic Benefits of Rail to Local Communities A WPI Economics Briefing for Rail Delivery Group 2024

- Heritage-sensitive architectural design
 - Interpretation and wayfinding linking station and Roman sites.
 - The development of active travel routes.
-

7. Economic Benefits

7.1 Labour Market and Commuting

Re-establishing the station would:

- Improve access to jobs in Newport, Cardiff, Cwmbran, and Bristol
- Reduce journey times and variability
- Lower household transport costs.

Wider economic benefits commonly add significant additional value to rail schemes.

Survey results show that a reopened station would immediately serve a substantial commuting market. Caerleon's population has almost doubled since the closing of the railway station in 1962, rising from 4,184 in 1961 to 7,971 in 2021¹⁰. Of those who currently drive to work or education, the majority travel to Newport, Cardiff, and Bristol, all of which would be directly accessible by rail from Caerleon. With 25% of respondents identifying commuting to work as their main reason for using the station, there is clear evidence that rail would support access to employment and education while reducing car dependency¹¹. Frequency of use expectations are high, with 18% anticipating using the station four or more times a week, 27% two to three times a week and 21% once a week; only 4% said they would never use it or were unsure. The WelTAG report of 2011 estimated that a Caerleon station would create an extra 92,400 journeys per annum.¹²

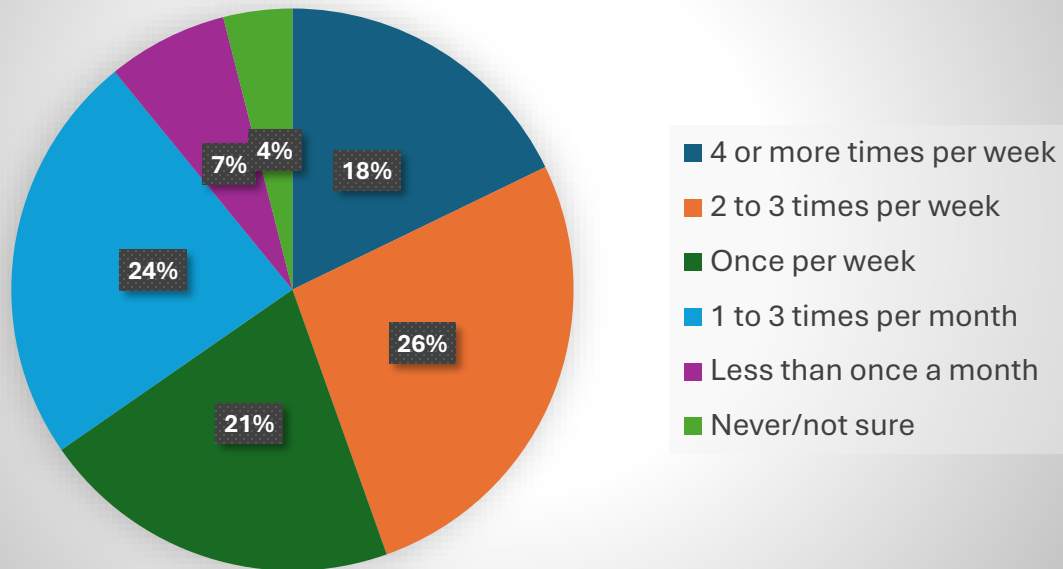
Approaching 50% of pupils attending Caerleon's three schools travel from outside of the catchment area, many from Newport. The influx of cars ferrying pupils, combined with other peak time traffic, creates virtual traffic gridlock twice each day, as well as overwhelming local bus services. The railway station would provide an attractive travel alternative.

¹⁰ 1961 and 2021 census returns

¹¹ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

¹² Abergavenny- Newport Rail Corridor, Option Development and Appraisal, WelTAG Report- March 2011.

How often do you think that you would use a Caerleon station?



7.2 Local Regeneration and Business Growth

Rail access supports:

- Increased High Street footfall.
- Growth in hospitality and retail
- Stronger investment confidence.

Evidence from other station reopenings indicates increases in commercial activity and property values.

7.3 Heritage Protection as Economic Value

Reducing traffic helps protect Roman assets and the designated Caerleon conservation area, lowering long-term conservation and maintenance pressures while preserving the town's core economic draw.

8. Social, Educational, and Community Benefits

Rail access improves:

- Inclusion for non-car households
- Access for young people, older residents, and disabled visitors
- School and university engagement with heritage assets
- Overall quality of life through quieter, safer streets.



The Marches Line through Caerleon

The way residents expect to access a station reinforces its social and environmental value. Eighty percent of responses to a survey included walking to the station, with another 10% expressing an intention to cycle¹³ This indicates that a reopened station would function as a genuinely local, walkable hub, improving mobility for non-drivers, young people and older residents while supporting healthier, low-carbon travel habits.

9. Policy Alignment

The proposal aligns strongly with:

- Llwybr Newydd – Wales Transport Strategy
- Cardiff Capital Region Transport Plan
- Newport City Council Corporate Plan
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act
- Clean Air Plan for Wales
- Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- *Today, Tomorrow, Together* TfW strategic vision

¹³ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

It delivers against goals for decarbonisation, cultural well-being, health and inclusive access.

10. Station Concept and Integration

10.1 Core Principles

- Use of the existing rail corridor
- Step-free, accessible design
- Integration with bus, walking, and cycling routes.
- Heritage-sensitive materials and landscaping.

10.2 Integration with the Town

Clear pedestrian routes and wayfinding would link the station with the High Street, museums, and Roman sites, reinforcing car-free visitor movement.

Survey evidence underlines the importance of high-quality pedestrian and cycling links between the station, the High Street, schools, and Roman sites. This supports a design approach that prioritises safe, legible, and attractive active-travel routes as part of the station's core concept.

11. Deliverability and Constraints

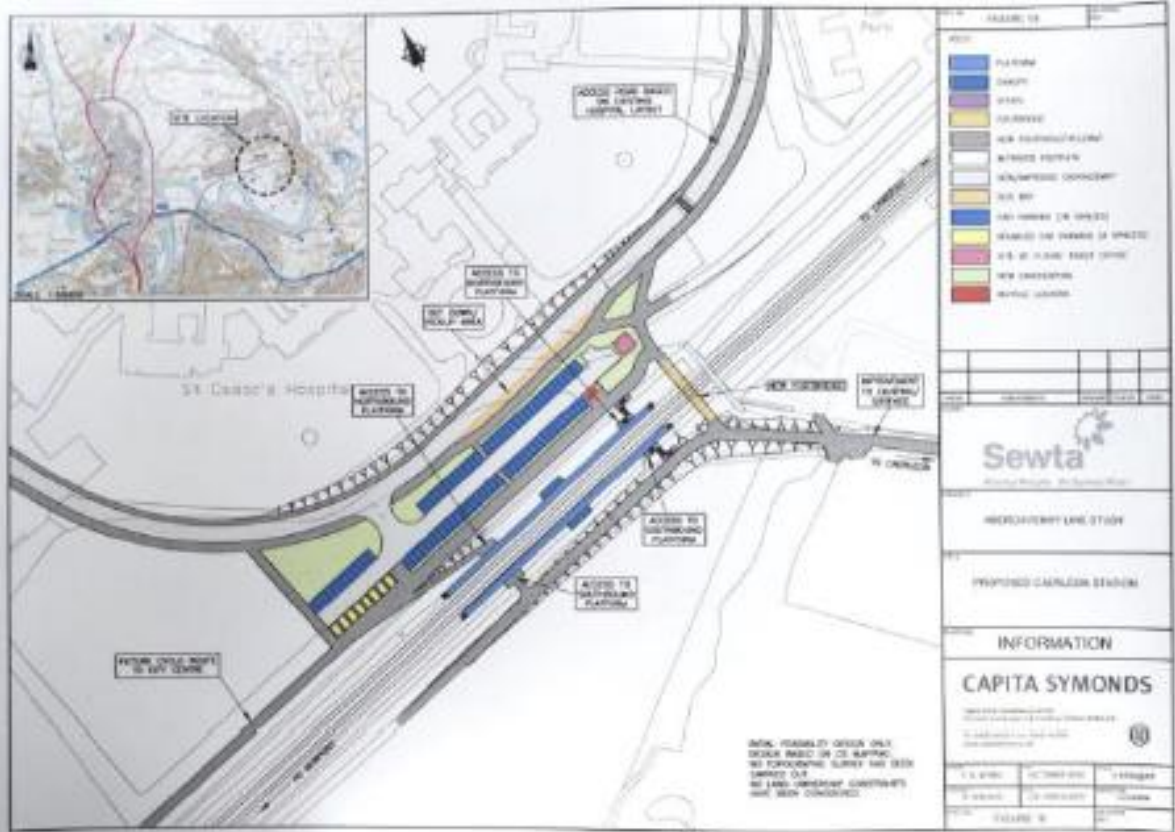
11.1 Station Location and Technical Feasibility

Reopening a station on an existing line presents lower risk than new rail infrastructure. Detailed engineering feasibility would be undertaken at the next stage.

The preferred station site:

- Lies immediately south of St Cadoc's Hospital
- Is safeguarded in the Newport Local Development Plan
- Is largely within Network Rail and Newport City Council ownership.
- Is located on National Cycle Route 88.

Opportunities will be impacted by the future of the St Cadoc's Hospital site. The Aneurin Bevan Health Board has indicated an intention to dispose of the site in the long term. At the time of writing the board has put the site forward as a potential development site within the Newport City Council Replacement Local Development Plan.



Caerleon station initial feasibility Design; Abergavenny - Newport Rail Corridor Option Development & Appraisal Final WelTAG Report - March 2011



Proposed station location; Google Maps 51.612098, -2.966016

Key technical points:

- Two 125m platforms (suitable for 5-car trains)
- Straight, plain-line track with compliant gradients
- Modern signalling already compatible with station provision
- Existing footbridge (installed 2011) enabling step-free access and active travel integration
- No known historic structures that would impede construction.

These factors indicate high deliverability and comparatively low engineering risk.

11.2 Heritage and Environmental Management

Delivery would include:

- Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Archaeological evaluation as required.
 - Environmental mitigation and enhancement.
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12. Financial Considerations

12.1 Indicative Costs

Comparable Welsh station schemes suggest a capital cost range of £8–20 million, dependent on configuration and mitigation requirements. An assessment of the cost benefit ratio of a Caerleon station made in 2011 was 1.4. The growth in population and changes in patterns of national rail travel since that date suggest that this figure is unlikely to have reduced¹⁴.

12.2 Funding Opportunities

The project is well suited to a blended funding approach and potential sources include:

- Welsh Government transport funding
- UK government funding via the *Today, Tomorrow, Together* TfW strategic vision
- Sustainable tourism and clean air funding streams.

¹⁴ Abergavenny - Newport Rail Corridor Option Development & Appraisal Final WelTAG Report - March 2011

13. Risks and Mitigation

Key risks include heritage sensitivity, funding availability and demand uncertainty. These are mitigated through early stakeholder engagement, robust appraisal and inclusion of tourism demand in modelling.

14. Next Steps

- Commission WelTAG Stage 2 Outline Business Case
 - Undertake engineering, heritage, and environmental assessments
 - Develop updated demand and visitor modelling
 - Establish governance with key stakeholders
 - Prepare funding submissions.
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15. Conclusion

Re-establishing Caerleon Railway Station represents a rare opportunity to align sustainable transport with heritage protection, traffic reduction, and economic growth. It addresses long-standing challenges while unlocking the full potential of one of Wales's most important historic places.

The case is strong, policy-aligned, and capable of progression to delivery.



An inter-city train approaching Caerleon crossing the River Usk