

The Case for Restoring a Caerleon Station



TRACS

Towards Restoring a Caerleon Station 2026

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Executive Summary

Transforming an Exceptional Heritage Destination (Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Caerleon is one of the most historically significant towns in the United Kingdom, distinguished by an exceptional concentration of Roman heritage. This importance has been formally recognised through the Roman Caerleon Partnership, established to maximise the town's value as a heritage and tourism destination. However, there is a major mismatch between these ambitions and the sustainability of Caerleon's transport provision.

Alleviating Chronic Traffic Congestion (Parts 5 and 6)

More than 11,000 vehicles pass through the town daily, across a single ancient bridge and around a historic layout of narrow streets. A survey of nearly 2,000 local residents found that 61% of those working drove to work. The consequence of this situation is frequent gridlock, pedestrian safety concerns, pressure on historic buildings and a history of poor air quality. A railway station is an essential part of any solution to alleviate this situation, offering a strategic shift from road to rail.

Boosting Economic Growth (Parts 6, 7 and 8)

Reopening a station will support a heritage led approach to economic growth and regeneration, with increased visitor numbers boosting local business. A significant area of Caerleon lies within the top 20% of the most deprived areas in Wales. A railway station will increase mobility and improve access to employment and education.

A Feasible and Deliverable Scheme (Parts 9, 10 and 11)

A major strength of the proposal is a high level of feasibility. The Marches study of 2024 concluded it would be possible to add an additional station on the line, using a Caerleon station as a test scenario. A station site has been identified with suitable track alignment, modern signalling and an appropriate gradient. A station footbridge was put in place in 2011.

Backed by Widespread Local and Political Support (Part 1)

A Caerleon railway station has support across the board. In the survey of local residents, 98% supported a station and 96% stated that they would use it. The station has the support of Newport City Council and is included within the new Transport for Wales strategic plan, *Today, Tomorrow, Together*. The strength of the case for a station has also been acknowledged by the Department of Transport in London.

In summary

There is an overwhelming case for a Caerleon station. Establishing a station aligns closely with Welsh transport strategy, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the Clean Air Plan for Wales and the Newport Local Development Plan. Restoring a Caerleon station is a practical, low risk intervention that would unlock the town's heritage potential, address congestion and air quality challenges and support sustainable economic growth.



The Case for Restoring a Caerleon Station

Promoting heritage access, reducing traffic congestion and supporting sustainable growth

1. Introduction

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.

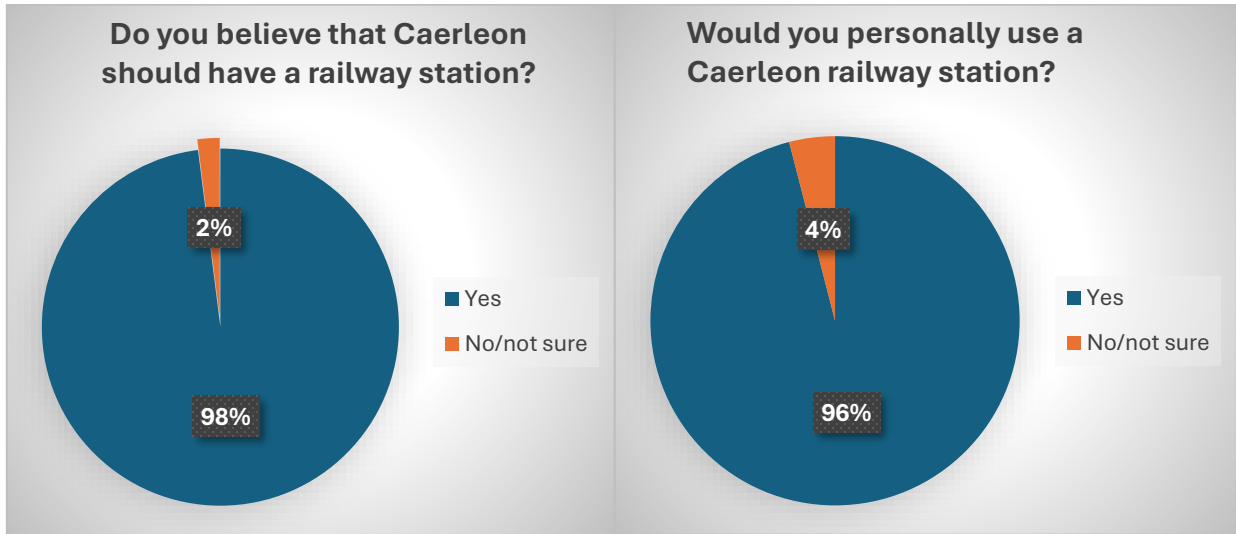
The case is structured to support progression into formal appraisal and funding stages and is suitable for consideration by Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, Newport City Council, Railtrack, Cadw, and funding bodies.

A survey of nearly 2,000 local residents showed overwhelming public support and clear patterns of intended use for a reopened Caerleon station. 98 percent of respondents believed Caerleon should have a railway station and 96% stated they would personally use

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

it if reopened³. The station is supported in the Newport City Council Development Plan⁴ and is supported via a unanimous resolution of the Council⁵. A Caerleon station is the first in a list of stations proposed in the 2026 Transport for Wales rail vision document, *Today, Tomorrow, Together*⁶. The strength of the case for a Caerleon Station has also been specifically acknowledged by the Department of Transport in London.⁷



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.

³ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

⁴ www.newport.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-development-plan/local-development-plan-adoption

⁵ Newport City Council - Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025

⁶ *Today, Tomorrow, Together: A vision for rail across Wales and Borders*, Transport for Wales, 2026

⁷ Letter from the Department of Transport to TRACS 6 May 2026

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.⁸ An Amgueddfa Cymru report of 2017 clearly identified traffic as an obstacle to Caerleon's development as a heritage destination⁹. 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.

⁸ Caerleon; conservation area appraisal, Newport Council, 2019

⁹ Review of Amgueddfa Cymru, Dr Simon Thurley, 2017.

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.

5. Traffic Congestion and Air Quality

5.1 Congestion in the Historic Core



High Street Caerleon; peak time gridlock at school closure

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 11310¹⁰. The one-way system operates as a bottleneck for:

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

¹⁰ 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.

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 passing the school between 8.00am and 9.00am.¹¹ Although recent improvements in levels of pollution have been recorded, long-term compliance is vulnerable without structural changes to travel behaviour.

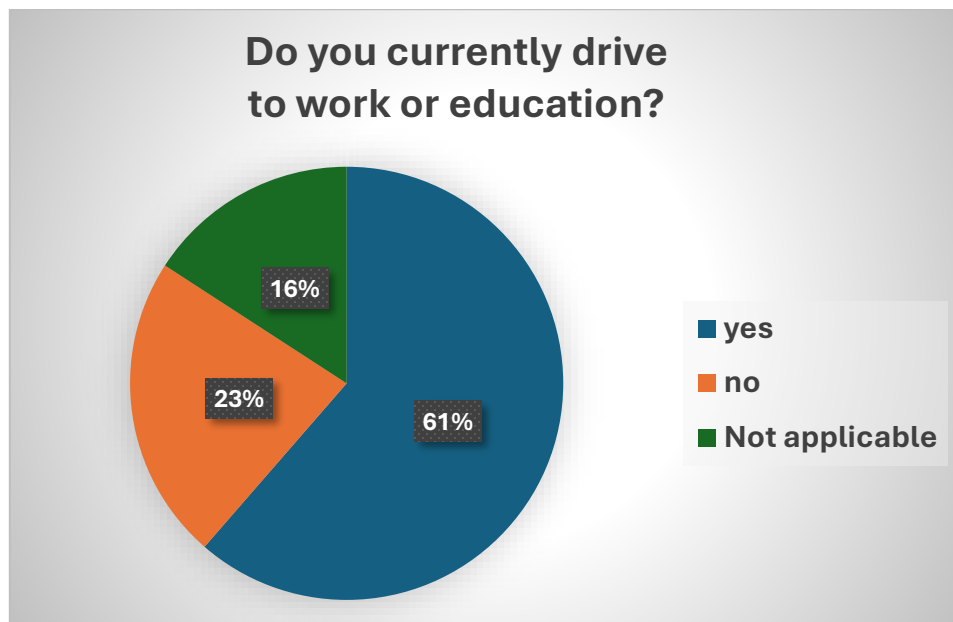
5.3 Rail as a Traffic Reduction Measure

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.

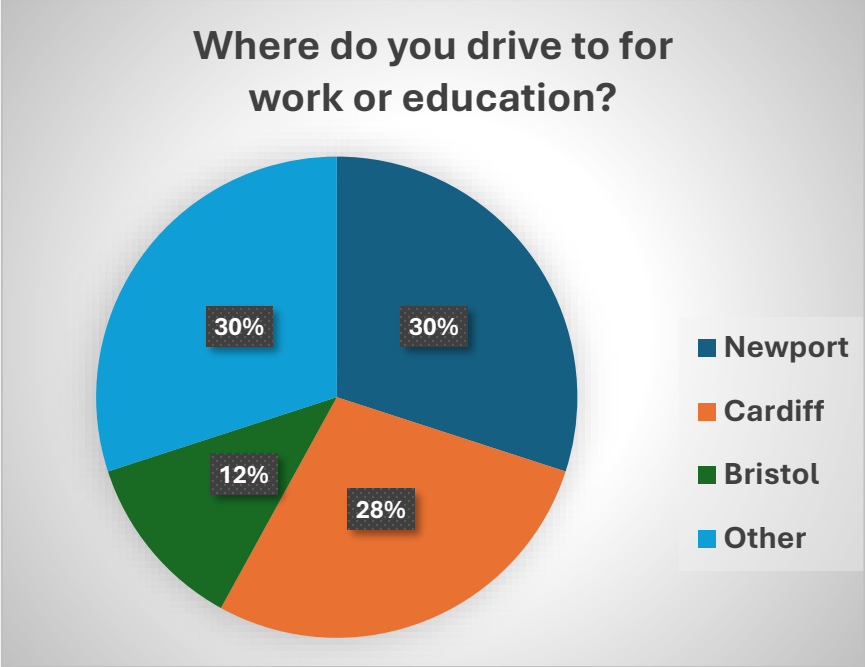
The WelTAG report of 2011¹² stated that, “a new station in Caerleon could greatly contribute to the reduction in cars travelling along key travel corridors into Cardiff and Newport by providing a viable sustainable travel alternative to the private car for commuter, leisure and tourism



¹¹ A survey by AECOM. Data conducted 25 February 2021. With COVID now much further in the past, this number of vehicles is likely to be greater.

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

trips.” The TRACS survey¹³ confirmed the scale of car dependency that a station could help address. Sixty-one percent of respondents currently drive to work or education, with the 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 businesses¹⁴.

¹³ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

¹⁴ Unlocking the Economic Benefits of Rail to Local Communities A WPI Economics Briefing for Rail Delivery Group 2024

6.2 A Heritage Arrival Experience

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

- Heritage-sensitive architectural design
 - Interpretation and wayfinding linking the 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.

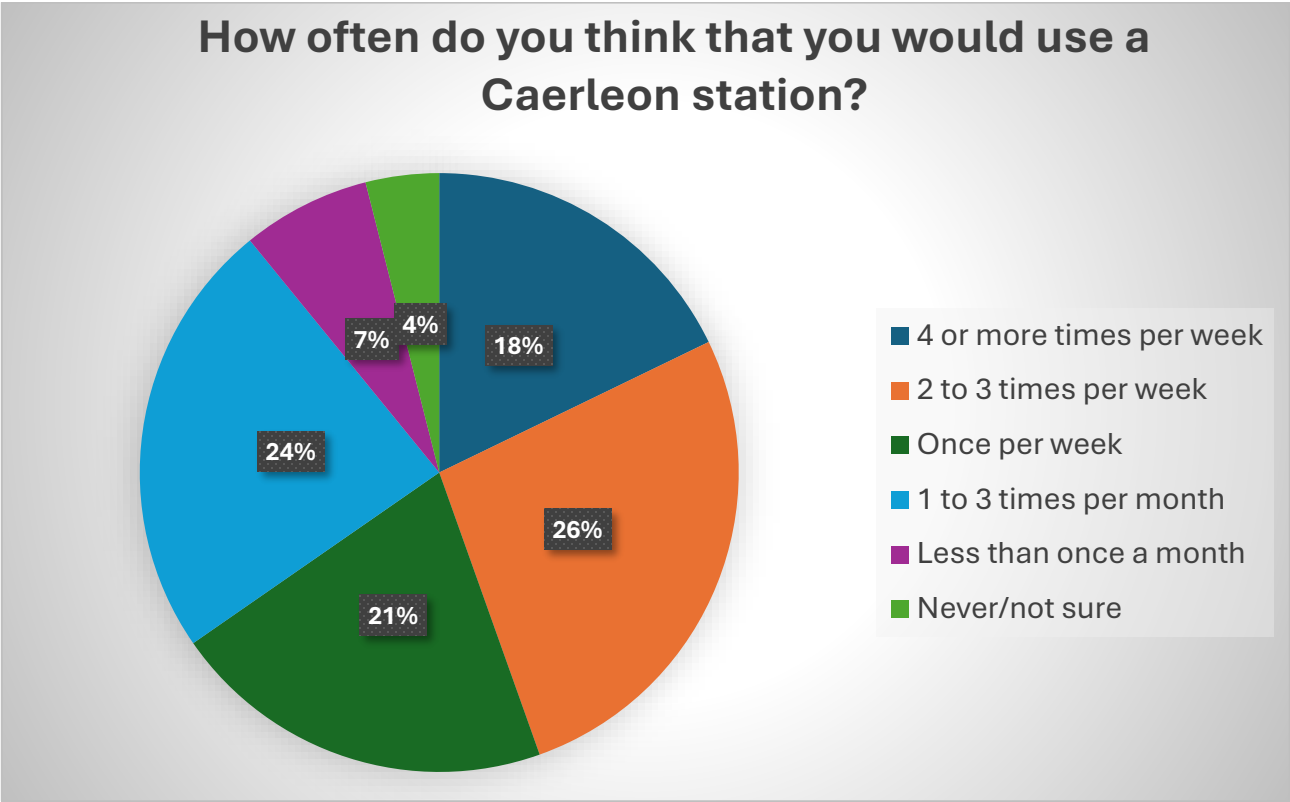
Survey results show that a reopened station would immediately serve a substantial commuting market. Caerleon's population has almost doubled since the closure of the railway station in 1962, rising from 4,184 in 1961 to 7,971 in 2021¹⁵. Of those who currently drive to work or education, the majority 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 dependency¹⁶. 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.¹⁷

¹⁵ 1961 and 2021 census returns

¹⁶ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

¹⁷ Abergavenny- Newport Rail Corridor, Option Development and Appraisal, WelTAG Report- March 2011.

Although Caerleon is often seen as an affluent community, a significant area of the town lies within the top 20% of the most deprived communities in Wales¹⁸. A railway station would greatly enhance employment opportunities.



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.

7.2 Local Regeneration and Business Growth

Rail access supports:

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

¹⁸ Newport City Council, Community Well-being Profile, 2021

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 cycle¹⁹ 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.

¹⁹ 2025 TRACS survey of 1,920 local residents

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

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.

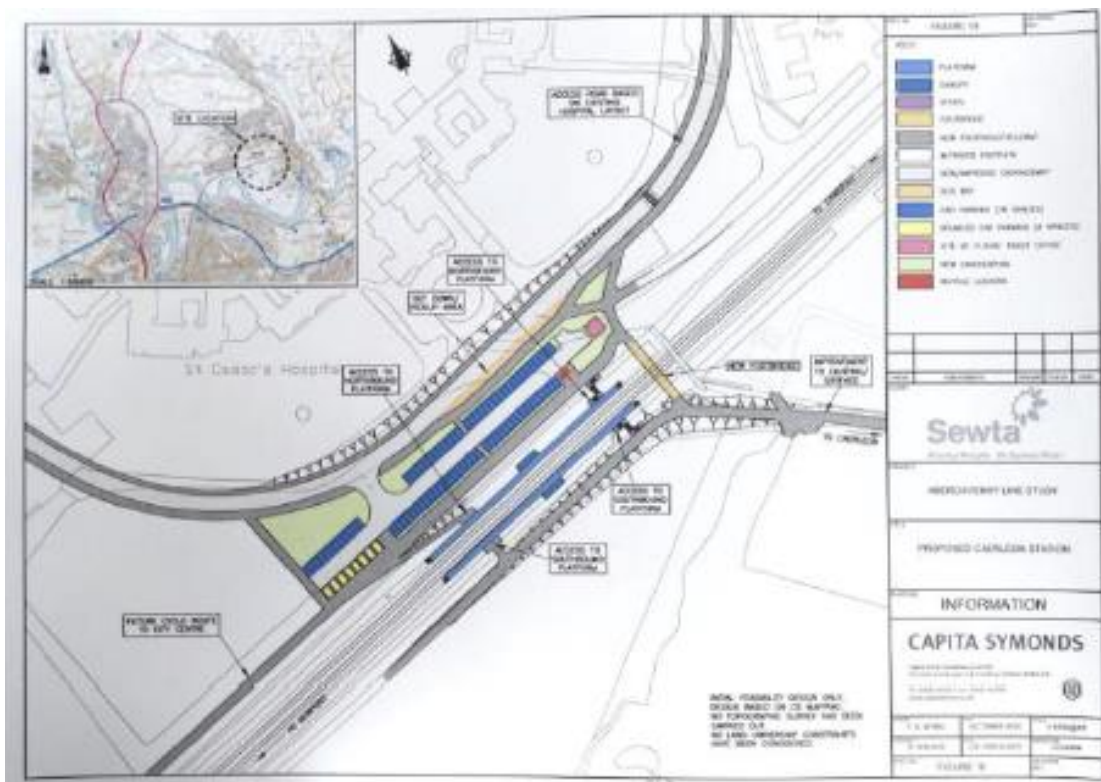
Survey evidence underlines the importance of high-quality pedestrian and cycling links between the station, the High Street, schools, and Roman sites. This supports a design approach that prioritises safe, legible, and attractive active-travel routes as part of the station's core concept.

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.

Using a Caerleon station as a test scenario a Network Rail Marches Line Study of 2024 concluded it would be possible to add one additional station on the line²⁰. This would provide funders with a degree of confidence that a new station could be deliverable.



Caerleon station initial feasibility Design²¹


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.

²⁰ The Marches Corridor Strategic Study, Network Rail, 2024

²¹ Abergavenny - Newport Rail Corridor Option Development & Appraisal Final WeITAG 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.
-

12. Financial Considerations

12.1 Indicative Costs

The WelTAG Stage 1 Report for the Chepstow to Newport Corridor assessed the cost of a Caerleon station as £5m- £25²². Comparable Welsh station schemes suggests a similar capital cost, 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 reduced²³.

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.

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.

²² Transport for Wales, Chepstow to Newport plus Eastern Valleys , Metro Enhancement Framework, WelTAG Stage 1, 2023

²³ Abergavenny - Newport Rail Corridor Option Development & Appraisal Final WelTAG Report - March 2011

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