

Saltash AR Trails: Discovery and Feasibility Report

Flexible augmented-reality trail experiences for Saltash

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Try it before you read it

This report includes a working demonstration developed during the one-day discovery. It shows a possible visitor experience using QR codes and image targets.

1. Scan the QR code on the demonstration card below with a supported modern smartphone and open the link. No app download is required.
2. Tap 'Start' and allow camera access when asked.
3. Point your phone at one of the two image targets and the pisky will pop out of the page, wave and tell you a secret.

SALTASH PISKY TRAIL

STOP 01

The Green Dragon

FORE STREET · SALTASH



1 SCAN ME

Opens the trail · no app

- Open your camera, hold it here.
- Tap the link that pops up.
- Allow the camera when asked.

saltash-ar.cp-staging.com

Look up. High above the Co-op's main door a green dragon still guards Fore Street, the sign of the Green Dragon Hotel, the town's coaching inn.

BEST VIEWED FROM ACROSS THE STREET

2 POINT AT A CARD

Fill the frame and hold steady



KIDS · PISKY

OR



GROWN-UPS · BRUNEL

One card or the other. These are not QR codes.
 Your camera app will ignore them. Use the page from step 1.



TOWN CENTRE · SALTASH

Map: Saltash Town Council visitor guide.
 Demo board: siting, artwork and image permissions subject to field verification.

Executive summary

We spent one day reviewing available options and building a small browser-based AR demonstration. It worked on the devices tested, but wider device and outdoor testing is still needed.

The discovery indicates that a reusable browser-based platform is sufficiently credible to explore through a more detailed brief and an appropriate proposal process. The current five-year working estimate is £50,000 excluding VAT, including the platform, hosting and a flexible content budget. No build should be approved until the scope, ownership, testing and capped price are agreed.

1. What we were asked to do

We were asked to explore options, likely costs and technical feasibility for seasonal AR trails that could attract visitors and increase footfall around Fore Street. We also considered content updates and ongoing support.

2. Preferred outcomes

The initial meeting identified the following preferences. They should guide the options appraisal rather than operate as fixed requirements:

- No app download preferred. The strongest route would work in a supported mobile browser across an agreed range of iPhone and Android devices.
- Simple access preferred. A family should be able to start within seconds of scanning a QR code, without accounts or lengthy instructions.
- Low-cost expansion preferred. Adding a trail, season or sponsored variant should be a content task rather than a rebuild.
- Sponsorship capabilities. Businesses could fund stops, appear on plaques and offer rewards.
- Seasonal flexibility. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Regatta variants could reuse the same infrastructure with different content.
- Transferable. The accountable body should be able to appoint another supplier without avoidable technical or intellectual-property barriers.
- Accessible. Every stop should provide an equivalent non-AR way to access the content, and both the digital experience and physical route should be tested against agreed accessibility requirements.
- Easy to maintain. A team designated by the accountable body should be able to make routine content changes through a documented workflow, while technical changes and platform maintenance would remain specialist support tasks.

3. Research

The discovery began with a review of available supplier platforms, self-service tools and relevant local precedent. The assessment considered app-download friction, scope for Saltash-specific content, ownership, seasonal reuse, sponsorship, accessibility, support and indicative cost. The supplier evidence and limitations are set out in Section 4.

None of the reviewed options matched all of the preferred outcomes without material trade-offs. Some provided fast, proven seasonal campaigns but limited ownership or bespoke control; others supported bespoke work at substantially higher indicative cost or required an app or per-scan licence fees. To test whether a transferable browser-based route was technically credible, we built a small prototype during the discovery day.

Three findings shape everything that follows:

1. **Browser-based AR offers the lowest-friction launch route because it avoids an app download.** The prototype worked on the selected devices tested, but this does not establish universal compatibility, outdoor performance or production readiness. Licences, dependencies and production hosting would also need to be confirmed before build.
2. **Trigger artwork is a major reliability factor.** During prototype testing, detailed, high-contrast artwork on a matte surface tracked more reliably than glossy, sparse or repetitive subjects. Further testing would be required under different lighting and outdoor conditions.
3. **Characters can be reused and adapted.** The pisky was created through an AI-assisted pipeline covering concept art, image generation, 3D modelling, texturing, rigging, voice generation, character animation, lip-sync, optimisation and export for mobile AR. This allows the base model to support lower-cost seasonal variations.

4. Market review evidence

The research considered four broad routes: a ready-made seasonal web trail, an established app-based trail platform, a bespoke browser-based platform and a self-service AR tool. The direct supplier findings are summarised below.

Prices and product information were gathered in July 2026 from supplier responses and published information. They cover different scopes and should be reconfirmed against the same brief before any purchasing decision.

Supplier	What they quoted	Fit for Saltash
High Street Safari	Standard seasonal trail: £999 + VAT (20% early-bird discount if booked 30+ days ahead). Bespoke AR trail: ~£500 per AR stop + £2,000 project management (e.g. 10-stop bespoke = £7,000 + VAT). Free 2D selfie alternative. Web-app, no download. 7-stop compact format, 25-minute routes. Sponsorship-ready.	Ran Saltash's 2022 Jubilee trail. Proven locally. Good for seasonal campaigns. Standard trails use existing characters; Saltash-specific characters and content are available through a higher-cost bespoke service.
Love Exploring	Subscription model, price on enquiry. Confirmed they can build bespoke Saltash characters. App-based (download required). Council clients include Manchester, Sandwell, Mid Suffolk. 120,000+ players in 2023, as reported by the supplier. Self-service control panel.	Strong engagement mechanics and analytics. App download is a friction point. Bespoke characters are possible but the platform belongs to them.
Zubr	~£50,000 + VAT for custom software and five years' support. Content creation costed separately (too speculative to ballpark without a detailed brief).	Premium bespoke platform. The £50k covers the platform only; content is additional. Strong portfolio but total cost

Supplier	What they quoted	Fit for Saltash
	WebAR, no app, QR-code, built-in map. White-labelling quoted as 'significantly more'. Bristol-based; portfolio includes Bath, Bristol Old Vic, Ashfield, Gravesham.	with content would substantially exceed £50k.
AT Creative	Only works within their own self-guided trails app platform.	Supplier-controlled app platform, offering less ownership and portability.

Other services reviewed

The desk review also considered Geocaching Adventure Lab, ZapWorks, Situate and Calvium AppTrails. Vicinity (formerly LoyalFree) does not provide AR trail functionality.

Geocaching Adventure Lab is free but does not offer true AR.

ZapWorks is a self-service platform, not a ready-made trail. The Pro plan costs £2,100 a year plus VAT, includes 12,000 launches, then charges £25 per additional 1,000. Designer projects are limited to 50MB and 10 image targets, while self-hosting and full white-labelling require an Enterprise plan. The experience would still need to be designed, built, tested and maintained. If the subscription ends, the projects become inactive.

No suitable AR trail offer was identified from Situate or Calvium AppTrails during this limited review.

5. Proposed approach

Based on the information available, none of the reviewed options appeared to meet all of Saltash's priorities without a significant trade-off. The prototype suggests that a bespoke browser-based platform is worth pricing and testing further, but it is not yet a commitment to build.

The next option to explore is a bespoke browser-based platform developed from the prototype. Visitors would scan a QR code and start the experience without downloading an app or creating an account. Authorised delivery partners would manage the content through a secure admin area.

The platform would include:

- Tools to create, duplicate, edit and archive trails and seasonal versions.
- Editable stops containing locations, trigger images, stories, characters, dialogue, sponsor details, rewards and optional passport stamps.
- A reusable library of artwork, 3D models, voices, animations, audio and plaque designs.
- Guided workflows for creating AI-assisted images, character variations and voices.
- Controls to preview, test, publish and unpublish content.
- Basic reporting on trail starts, stop visits and completions, subject to the agreed privacy approach.
- Backups and exportable content.

Example first trail

An initial trail could use 8–10 stops around Fore Street, combining local stories, animated characters, quizzes and a digital passport. The route and content would be agreed with the Saltash Town Team and community, then checked for permissions, accessibility, safety and historical accuracy.

The same platform could later support seasonal, sponsored and venue trails without rebuilding the system.

6. Support and ownership

Routine content could be managed by a trained team or appointed agency, while technical changes and platform maintenance would require specialist support.

The accountable body would receive the agreed source code, assets, credentials, licences and documentation needed to appoint another supplier in future.

7. Working budget

These are early estimates, not a formal quotation, and exclude VAT. The final proposal would confirm exactly what is included and the maximum cost.

Element	Estimated cost
Reusable browser-based AR platform, first digital trail, handover and basic training	£20,000
Five-year hosting and maintenance	£10,000
Future trail-development drawdown	£20,000
Total	£50,000 excluding VAT

For planning purposes, the £20,000 platform estimate includes the design and development of the reusable browser-based platform, creation and configuration of the first digital trail, the supplier time required to produce the agreed digital content and assets, technical documentation, handover and one basic training session for the nominated team.

It excludes the manufacture or installation of signs and plaques, printing, VAT and separately charged third-party usage, licensing or subscription costs, including AI generation, synthetic voice, licensed media or proprietary software services. Any such costs would be identified, agreed and costed separately in the final proposal.

For planning purposes, the £10,000 hosting and maintenance allowance covers five years from service commencement and includes managed hosting, SSL certificates, routine monitoring, backups and restoration support, security and dependency updates, periodic testing on agreed mainstream mobile browsers, minor defect fixes and reasonable business-hours technical support. It excludes new features, new trail content, major redesigns, on-site support, obsolete-device compatibility and third-party services other than the hosting infrastructure expressly included in this allowance. Service limits, response times, backup retention and availability targets would be confirmed in the final proposal.

The drawdown is based on a working allowance of £4,000 a year, but it could be used when needed across the five-year period. It does not guarantee a fixed number of trails each year. Each piece of work would be scoped, costed and approved before it begins.

Indicative drawdown costs are:

- Small trail or content pack using the existing platform: from £750
- Trail or seasonal update using existing assets: from £400
- Corporate or sponsored trail: from £750

The final cost of each trail would depend on the number of stops and the amount of new storytelling, artwork, character work, audio and printed material required.

Any commercial resale or revenue-sharing arrangement would be discussed and agreed separately.

8. Next step

If the Saltash Town Team wishes to explore the concept further, the next step would be to agree a more detailed brief and determine an appropriate process for seeking and assessing proposals.

Before approval, the Saltash Town Team should confirm the scope, route, permissions, accessibility, ownership, testing, support, timetable and full cost including VAT.

Before build, agree what success looks like and how it will be measured, including trail starts, completions, repeat use and participating-business feedback.

The first trail should be tested and evaluated before further trails are commissioned.

Carbon Pixel prepared this review and may participate in any future procurement process. Any appointment would be made by the accountable body through its normal approval and procurement process, with all submissions assessed against the same agreed brief and criteria.

Appendix: Early Fore Street ideas

These are illustrative ideas, not an agreed route. Locations, stories and technology would require community input, permissions, historical review and field testing.

No.	Stop	Illustrative AR moment
1	The Green Dragon, Fore Street	A 'time window' showing the old Green Dragon Hotel from a century ago. Field verification required.
2	The Brunel Bench, Fore Street	A miniature steam train puffs across the span of the bench.
3	The Guildhall	The 1381 charter unrolls and reads itself, with a mayoral pisky commenting.
4	Saltash Heritage Museum, Lower Fore Street	Archive photographs colourise and animate in the window.
5	Union Inn (Union Flag house)	The flag drains to grey and a pisky splashes the colours back.
6	St Nicholas & St Faith Church	A stained-glass pisky and a bell-ringing mini-game.
7	Wesley Methodist Church, Callington Road	A pisky on a preaching stone, Wesley's ferry-crossing story and a quiz.
8-10	Additional stops	Up to three locations and stories to be agreed with the Saltash Town Team, subject to route, access and permission checks.

Heritage content would be developed with local historians and approved before publication. The Green Dragon concept would require field testing; if the sculpture is not a reliable trigger, an illustrated plaque could be used instead.