

A photograph of two monkeys in a lush green environment. One monkey, with brown and black fur, is perched on a large, vibrant red flower. It is looking down at a smaller monkey, which has grey and brown fur, sitting on the same flower. The background is filled with green foliage.

COLLABORATION TO TELL THE STORIES OF LIVING LINKS

by Lizzie Seymour

Living Links is a long-standing research partnership between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and the University of St Andrews, focusing on exploration of human cognition through behavioural and observational studies of brown capuchins and common squirrel monkeys living together in an exhibit of the same name at Edinburgh Zoo.

Fifteen years after opening the exhibit, we began a complete overhaul of the visitor experience, jointly funded and working in close collaboration with researchers from the University of St Andrews, and the interpretation, learning technology and keeper teams at Edinburgh Zoo.

Find out more about Living Links: <https://youtu.be/BWg4ht6a0DA>

rzss.org.uk



COLLABORATION

For the refurbishment project, we worked closely with our living collections team (keepers) at Edinburgh Zoo, our interpretation and learning technology teams, as well as researchers and academics at the University of St Andrews.

The project was jointly funded by the University and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), with both supplying dedicated members of staff to work on the resources and carry out extensive evaluation research.



University of
St Andrews

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

We developed a visual toolkit for Living Links which tied in with the new RZSS brand, but also contained elements to make it distinctive onsite.

We created an immersive visitor journey all the way through the exhibit, starting with interpretive flags on the entry and exit walkways which set the scene for the science and animals that could be seen at the enclosure.

We repainted the walls of the corridors to better match the brand but also to allow for less light glare when viewing the monkeys through glass in a dark space.



EXPLORE LIVING LINKS
FOR YOURSELF IN VR:

discover.rzss.org.uk/SMF

STORYTELLING

Interpretation is all about storytelling, and we had multiple stories to tell in the same spaces. We needed to tell visitors about the species of monkeys they can see and our conservation work in the wild, but from the research carried out by the University of St Andrews we also knew that visitors really wanted to hear stories about the individual monkeys, their names and their personalities. We also had lots of stories about the research to share as well!

We used lots of different interpretive methods including interactive spinning blocks, a strong visual toolkit and videos on large screens. We also included QR codes linking to further information on topics such as the live research or a full list of all the individual monkeys, for those interested.



SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

From the very beginning of the exhibit, we were keen to put the visitor in the heart of the science that goes on at Living Links, to encourage children to pursue careers in the field in the future, or to get the public interested in citizen science. We have multiple photo points where people can be included in science, and fun personality traits so people can find the scientific roles best suited to them

We also tell the stories of past and live research in fun and engaging ways, ensuring that it is made clear that all participation from the monkeys is always completely voluntary.



ONLINE LEARNING

LIVING LINKS

Living Links

Welcome to our 'Living Links' learning programme!

This bespoke learning programme of interactive, interdisciplinary and online sessions developed by the 'Living Links' collaboration between the University of St Andrews and RZSS aims to deepen learners' connections with nature, increase awareness of how our minds affect our health and wellbeing and improve understanding of the role of research in scientific development.

Look out for the 'Information for teachers and educators' drop down in each section for our learning intentions, success criteria, and links to further resources and excellence.

> Information for Teachers and Educators



This centre is a JOINT RESEARCH INITIATIVE between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and the University of St Andrews. The centre also SUPPORTS STUDIES BY SCIENTISTS from the Scottish Primate Research Group (SPRG) and worldwide.

To accompany the physical refurbishment of the Living Links exhibit, we also created a suite of 6 online lessons aimed at primary teachers on our digital learning environment ZOODLE.

These lessons explore topics covered in Living Links such as communication, problem solving, and theory of mind, in an engaging and approachable way.

The online resources use the same visual toolkit as the interpretation around the exhibit, and are often linked to throughout the physical space.

DISCOVER OUR ONLINE
SCHOOL'S RESOURCES:

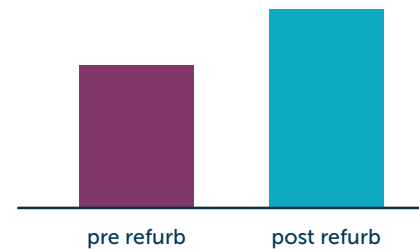
[discover.rzss.org.uk/
livinglinks](https://discover.rzss.org.uk/livinglinks)



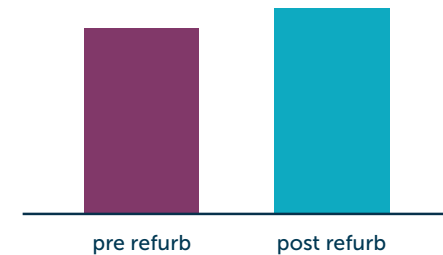
Researchers from the University of St Andrews carried out visitor surveys before and after the refurbishment to inform our work and evaluate.



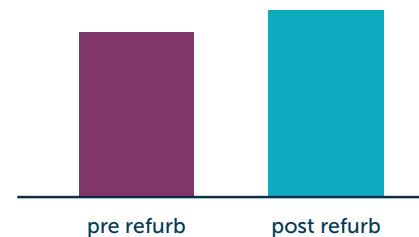
I enjoy the research topics at Living Links



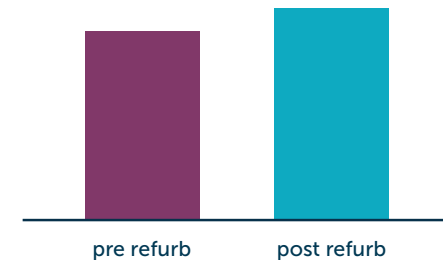
There were opportunities for me to get involved in research at Living Links



I will tell a friend about what I've learnt at Living Links today



My visit to Living Links made me feel connected to nature



What was your favourite part of your visit to Living Links today?

IMPACT



WHAT WE LEARNT

- 🐾 How to collaborate with academics!
- 🐾 How to tell multiple stories in the same space
- 🐾 How to blend onsite and online
- 🐾 How to make interpretation monkey-friendly!





THANKS FOR READING!

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions:



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