

Royal Society web app development

# Summer Science Exhibition visitors skyrocket by 375%



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**contra**



**Against the norm.** Experienced, pragmatic do-ers that will propel you forward using creativity and technical prowess.

**Contra makes it happen.**

## The client.

The Royal Society is the independent UK science academy, dedicated to promoting excellence in science. Its flagship annual public engagement event, The Summer Science Exhibition, has been running since 1778 and showcases cutting-edge research to a range of audiences.

## The challenge.

After COVID swept the nation forcing thousands of live events to cancel, the Royal Society needed to create a fully digital experience for The Summer Science Exhibition, fast. Contra was challenged to create an immersive 3D exhibition environment within a three-month deadline.

## The solution.

Conduct a content audit and plan taxonomy. Research creatives and build moodboards, initial sketches, and design renders. Create iconography and build 3D environments with microinteractions. Conduct user testing and action iterations. Launch web application.

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**We really loved the immersive 3D environment Contra created with various worlds you could explore. The project was a very collaborative process. It was also very smooth. We had a very, very tight timeline with three months from start to finish. Contra was really on top of it and went the extra mile to make the project work in such a short space of time.**



***Rob Rutter, Head of Digital Marketing and Engagement at The Royal Society***



The Summer Science Exhibition is the Royal Society's flagship annual event. **But COVID-19 hit and live events were forced to cancel. The Society needed an innovative digital solution... fast.**





## First contact.

The Royal Society approached Contra needing a fully digital solution to their Summer Science Exhibition. It required a hub that visitors could land on that could link to content to various content categories, from astrophysics to geology. Most of all, it needed to be exciting to explore – a typical menu structure wouldn't cut it. Contra had to develop something that would capture the imagination of visitors and provide an experience they couldn't forget.



# Research and planning.

Content audit and taxonomy, creative research and moodboards, demographic considerations





## Blast off.

With just three months before the exhibition, Contra was on a tight timeline. With a vast array of content for audiences to discover, The Royal Society needed a way of categorising and displaying content so audiences could easily work their way through the hub and find what they were looking for. Contra carefully considered taxonomy, organising each piece of content into different categories.

Marine biology.

Physics. **Chemistry.**

Earth Sciences. Zoology.

**Astrophysics.**

Biology. **Oceanology.**

**Nanotechnology.**

**Mathematics and statistics.**

Botany. Geology. Genetics.

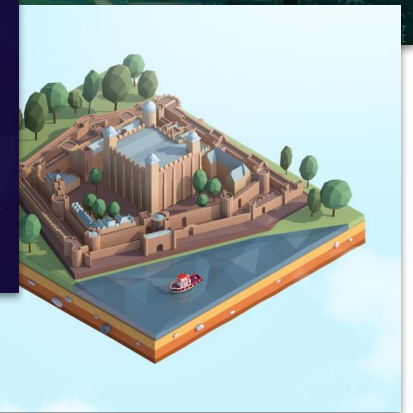
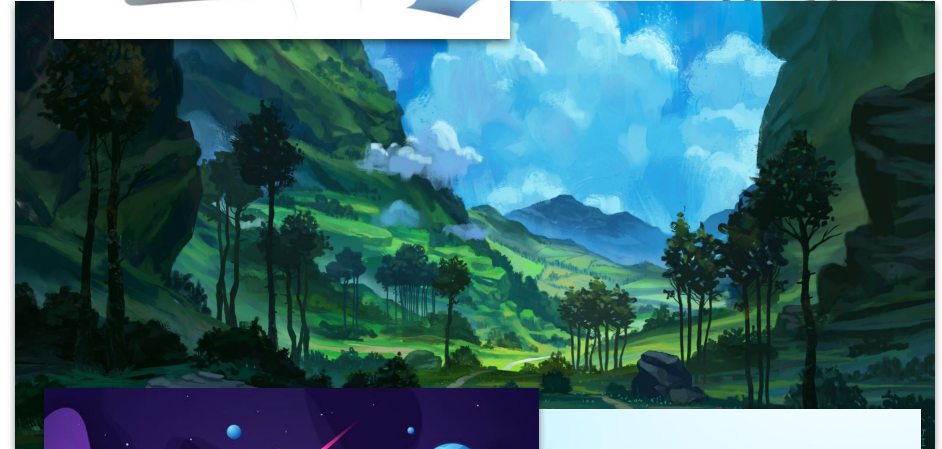
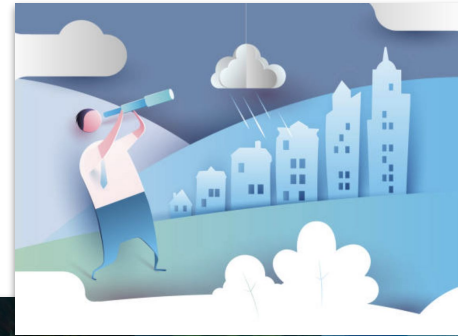
**Meteorology.**



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## Global search.

We researched a range of interactives from around the web, each with unique visual styles. These included layered illustrations, low-polygon models, and maps and isometric areas. We presented these to the Royal Society team in the form of moodboards to gain some design direction.



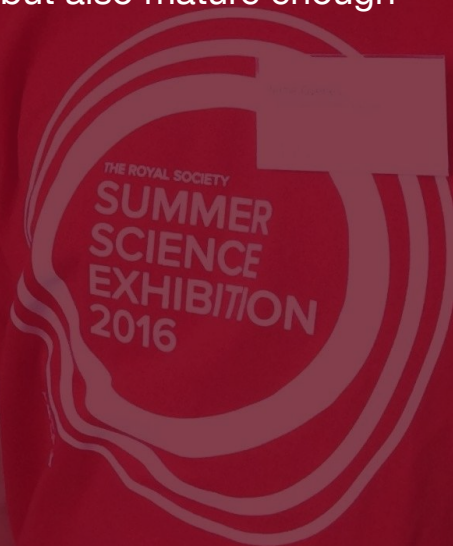


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## Universal audience.

With a varied range of visitors, from government policymakers to schoolchildren, Contra needed to appeal to all ages and scientific acumen. It had to be fun and colourful for children but also mature enough for adults.

Tell us  
what  
you think





# Strategy and implementation.

Initial sketches, design renders, iconography, 3D environment



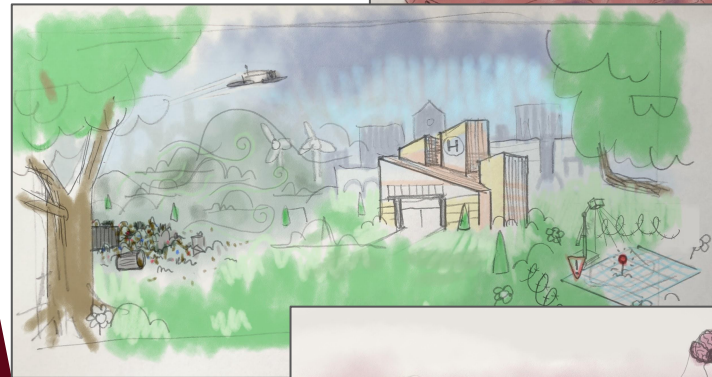
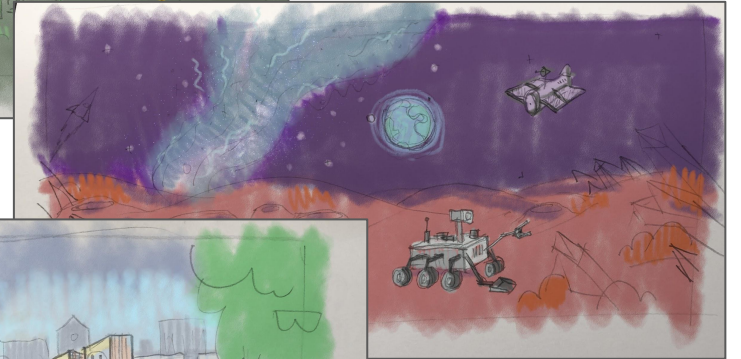
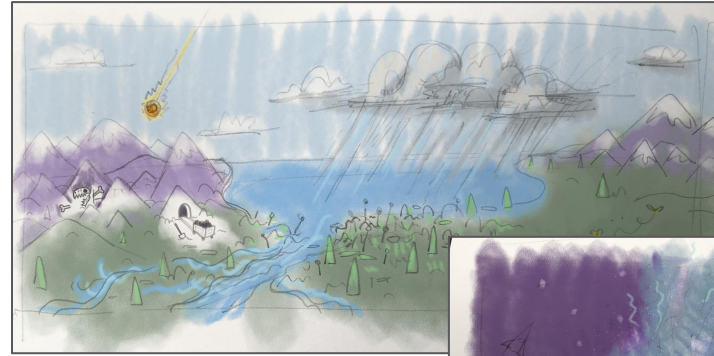
# Breakout space.

From the outer reaches of our universe to the inner workings of the human body, we decided to create four amazing worlds for visitors to explore in an immersive 3D environment. Summer Science Exhibition visitors would start in a central foyer, where they could access each zone through a door into an awe-inspiring world.



# Picture perfect.

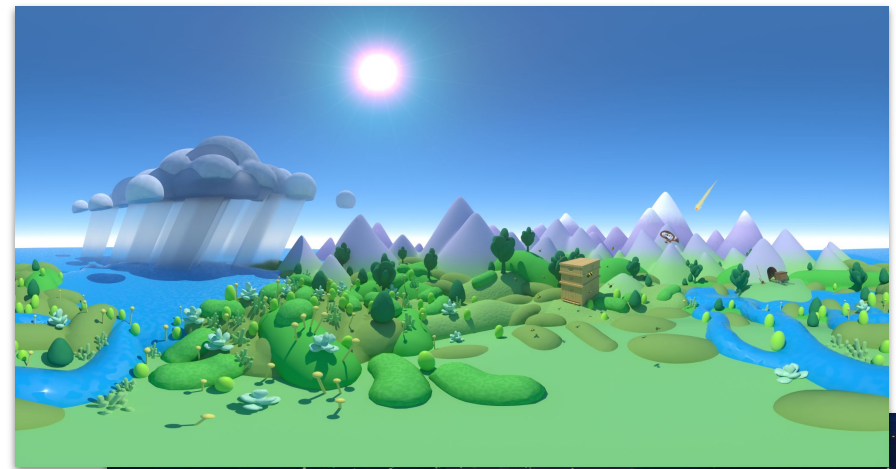
We sketched out the four zones to provide a launchpad for creating the immersive 3D environments. The sketching process enabled us to tap into our inner child and create something children would enjoy, while ensuring each world had all the necessary elements to represent each individual exhibition.





# Worlds apart.

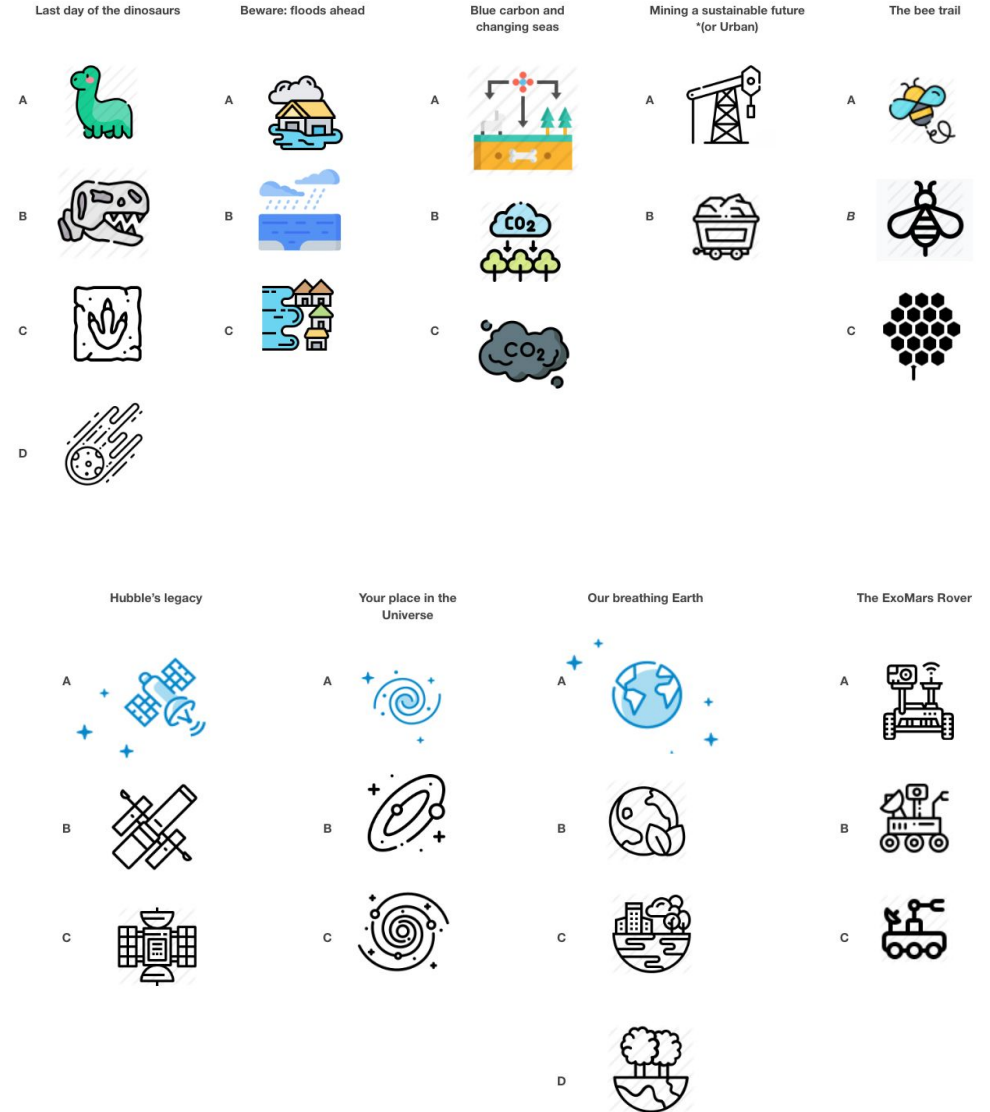
We then created design renders of each zone, incorporating all the different elements required to showcase the range of topics.





# Style icons.

Within each zone, users could hover over interactive topic icons and click them. Each icon would be animated to further bring the exhibition to life. They'd then be met with interactive content, games, and lighting lectures related to that topic. Using the existing event branding and animated iconography created by the Royal Society Design team, we incorporated these into the hub and applied interaction to link to each of the exhibits.



# Litmus test.

We then pulled it all together and built the 3D immersive worlds. As we developed the platform, we tested it with a varied range of users that matched The Royal Society's audience. It proved to be a hit with both adults and children alike. Check out this introductory video showcasing the platform with the revered Professor Brian Cox.



A young girl with blonde hair is wearing a VR headset and smiling. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. In the background, another person is visible but out of focus.

# Creativity and innovation.

Creative execution





# Masters of the universe.

## Zone 1: View from Above

Blast off on a trip to Mars and discover if there has ever been life on the red planet. Find out the answer to the age-old question, 'Where do galaxies come from?'. Unearth how we track carbon from space. And learn how the Hubble Space Telescope has transformed our view of the universe.



# City of light.

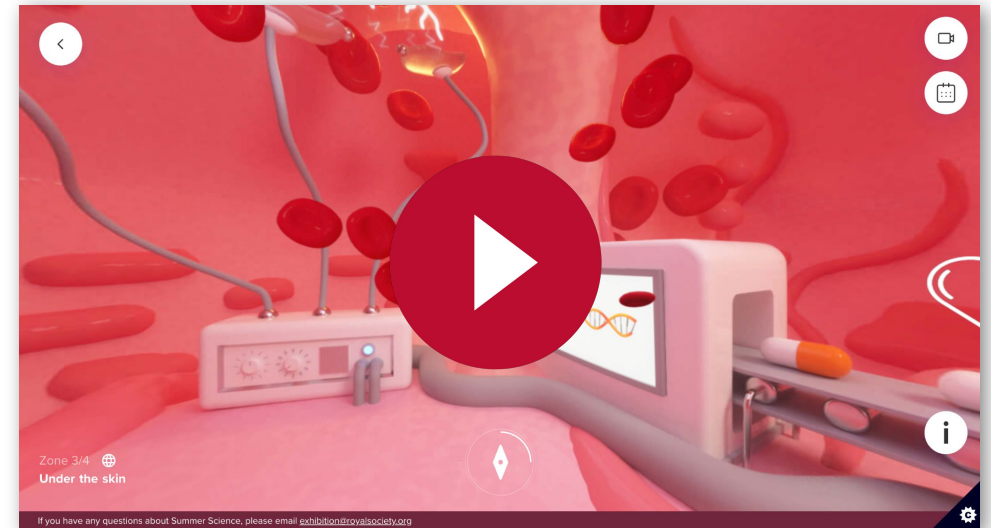
## Zone 2: Urban Landscape

Throw away any preconceptions about renewable energy and discover how microbes can turn rubbish into riches. Breeze through the latest research on how to trap harmful pollutants in our atmosphere. Blow your mind learning how to tell the difference between a landmine and a bottle top. And get clinical exploring the new-age question, 'Would you trust a robot surgeon?'

# Inner space.

## Zone 3: Under the Skin

Travel through the human body. From personalised 3D printed pills to downloading your brain to the internet, explore how scientists are revolutionising technology and medicine.





# Natural selection.

## Zone 4: Forces of Nature

Get back to nature and discover how we can use the environment to tackle the climate emergency. Walk with dinosaurs during their last days on earth. And bug out with busy bees as we reveal how we can save these vital creatures.





# Results.

Video views, website analytics, testimonials, link to  
Summer Science Exhibition 2021

## The Final Frontier.

The Summer Science hub was a roaring success – a scientific breakthrough, so to speak. The exhibition had over 60,000 visitors to the hub, nearly four times the previous year. With over 450,000 video views and increase in site traffic by 182% year-on-year, the Royal Society team were elated with the results. We are now continuing to work with the team to build a modern, bleeding-edge website. Watch this (ahem) space!

**450,000**  
video views

**182%**  
increase in site  
traffic YoY

**60,000**  
visitors to the hub



# Chain reaction.

The reaction from The Royal Society team has been overwhelmingly positive and they had excellent feedback from visitors. Listen to our glowing testimonial from Rob Rutter, Head of Digital Marketing and Engagement at The Royal Society.



# Space exploration.

Want to see it live in action? Check out the Summer Science Exhibition 2021 now and expand your horizons.



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**Contra delivered a really creative and practical solution that hit our brief, budget and tight deadline. With over great feedback from visitors and over 450,000 video views, we were really happy with the results.**



***Rob Rutter, Head of Digital Marketing and Engagement at The Royal Society***



A person stands on a dark, silhouetted hill under a deep red, starry night sky. A bright diagonal line of light, resembling the Milky Way, stretches across the upper half of the image. The scene is partially obscured by a white diagonal shape in the bottom-left corner.

# Thanks...

for reading, let us know if you have any questions :)

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