Design Museum exhibition features UK-built Mars rover

A model of the rover – named after British chemist and DNA pioneer Rosalind Franklin – is part of the museum's Moving to Mars exhibition, which invites visitors to consider the design challenges of travelling to and living on another planet.

The exhibition, which runs until 23 February 2020, looks at the seven-month journey to Mars and what the first people to make the journey might wear, eat and live in once they arrive on the red planet.

The Rosalind Franklin rover is due to launch in 2020 and land on Mars in 2021 as part of the joint European Space Agency (ESA) and Roscosmos ExoMars mission. The rover will drill down two metres beneath the surface, analyse the soil and search for evidence of past – and perhaps even present – life.

Sue Horne, Head of Exploration at the UK Space Agency, said:

"With ESA and NASA due to launch missions to Mars next year, this exhibition comes at a time when our sights are firmly set on the red planet.

"Rovers like Rosalind Franklin will allow us to explore Mars and search for signs of life, potentially answering one of our greatest scientific questions. But it is also right to keep one eye on the future and consider the challenges that the first astronauts who land, and live, on Mars will face."

The UK Space Agency is the second largest European contributor to the mission, with a number of UK companies and universities playing a leading role in the design and manufacture of the rover. After being shipped from the UK to France in August for environmental testing, it is expected to be integrated into the spacecraft that will transport it to Mars early next year.

Brendan Innis from Airbus on the design challenges of building a rover designed to search for signs of life on another planet

The UK is a founding member of ESA and will make ambitious new investments next month at the Ministerial Council meeting known as Space19+. This will strengthen national capabilities and ensure the UK plays a significant role in global efforts to return humans to the Moon, bring back the first samples from Mars and develop innovative new technologies for life on Earth.

The government has also announced plans for a national space strategy, supported by the establishment of a National Space Council. This will help maximise the benefits of space for the whole of the UK.

Elsewhere UKSEDS, the student body for the exploration and development of space, have launched a competition for teams of students to design, build and

test a Mars rover.

The deadline to enter the Olympus Rover Trials challenge is 31 October 2019.