

Press release: Astronaut Tim Peake launches competition to name ExoMars Rover

Due to launch in August 2020 the UK-built rover is part of the European Space Agency's ExoMars mission which will look at how Mars has evolved and whether there may be conditions for life.

The ExoMars rover will be the first of its kind to travel across the Martian surface and drill down to determine if evidence of life is buried underground, protected from the destructive radiation that impinges the surface today. It will collect samples and analyse them with next-generation instruments, many designed by British engineers.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"Exploring the surface of another planet is what many scientists and researchers dream of and now a British-built rover will travel the surface of Mars to answer some fundamental questions, and the public can be part of this exciting new chapter by naming the rover. We want creative and bold entries – I'll start the ball rolling with Rover McRoverface!

"The ExoMars mission showcases the very best of the UK's world-leading robotics expertise and this mission will inspire the next generation of engineers, scientists and space enthusiasts to be part of the journey as the UK continues to reach for the stars. We are truly entering the new Great British Space Age."

The competition was unveiled by British ESA astronaut Tim Peake at the Farnborough International Airshow today (Friday 20th July). Tim Peake said:

"Mars is a fascinating destination, a place where humans will one day work alongside robots to gather new knowledge and search for life in our Solar System.

"The ExoMars rover is a vital part of this journey of exploration and we're asking you to become part of this exciting mission and name the rover that will scout the Martian surface."

The UK is the second largest European contributor to the ExoMars mission, behind Italy, having invested €287 million in the mission and £14 million on the instruments.

Airbus Defence and Space is leading the build of the rover while the UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory is leading on a key instrument known as the PanCam, a high resolution 3D camera which will be used to look at the terrain and rocks to try to detect signs of life.

Leicester University and Teledyne e2v are involved in work on the Raman

Spectrometer with STFC RAL Space processing the data it delivers. ExoMars will be the first mission to combine the capability to move across the surface and to study Mars at depth.

The rover, which is due to land on Mars in March 2021, uses solar panels to generate the required electrical power, and is designed to survive the cold Martian nights with the help of batteries and heater units.

Another part of the ExoMars mission, the Trace Gas Orbiter, is already at Mars, looking for atmospheric gases that may be linked to active geological or biological processes.

In 2014 more than 4,000 people responded to a call to name Tim Peake's 6-month mission to the International Space Station, with Principia being chosen as the winner. The name referred to Isaac Newton's world-changing three-part text on physics, *Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, describing the principal laws of motion and gravity.

The Holiday Makers is a summer-long campaign to get kids making, inventing and having fun in the Year of Engineering. The campaign is supported by organisations such across the country, including the UK Space Agency, and there are lots of ways for families to get involved over the summer holidays, from free activities that kids can do at home, to events across the country and weekly challenges from partners like the Science Museum.

Engineering makes a major contribution to our economy, from driving advances in healthcare and communication to supporting our growing space industry, but the sector faces a major skills gap and lack of diversity – there is annual shortage of 20,000 engineering graduates each year, only 12% of the engineering workforce is female, and less than 8% comes from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background.

As well as the honour of naming the rover the winner of the competition will receive a tour for four people of the Airbus facility in Stevenage where the Mars rover is being built.

[View the competition terms and conditions.](#)