

SPACE SYSTEMS

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Airbus Defence and Space to build STEM centre at its UK Exomars Rover Test Facility in Stevenage

- Airbus Defence and Space centre for Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Stevenage will welcome 27,000 students in the next five years
- £2.5m centre will be operated in conjunction with local further education college North Hertfordshire College
- Flagship ExoMars rover programme to inspire next generation
- Hertfordshire LEP to provide £1.039m funding towards centre as part of its commitment to promoting STEM subjects

Airbus Defence and Space has announced it will build a £2.5m STEM centre built around its Exomars Rover test facility in Stevenage. The centre aims to attract more than 5,000 students a year and inspire the next generation of space technicians, scientists and engineers.

North Hertfordshire College will run the STEM education programme at the centre, in close cooperation with Airbus Defence and Space's engineers and technicians working in the area. Visitors will enjoy a series of interactive STEM exhibits as well seeing the 30 metre by 13 metre Mars yard test area in action, with rovers navigating across the simulated Martian landscape.

Work on building the centre, which has secured £1.039m funding from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, is due to start in July 2016 and be completed by December 2016. In addition to the 5,000 student visitors per year, the centre is aiming to reach up to 20,000 people every year through its wider activities including a website and Outreach with schools. The total cost of the project over the next 5 years is £3.2m.

Andy Stroomer, Head of Earth observation, navigation and science and Site Director of the Airbus site in Stevenage said: "By investing in this centre and making the most of the Mars yard test area we hope to encourage students to follow science and engineering careers in the growing space industry and the wider industrial community. The partnership between North Herts College and Airbus Defence and Space is a unique collaboration to enhance STEM uptake and build a future generation of skilled workers."

Matt Hamnett, Principal of North Hertfordshire College said: "Creating an education centre linked to the ExoMars Rover mission represents a unique opportunity to inspire young people to think about careers in science, tech, engineering and maths. It is a real pleasure for us to collaborate with a business, in Airbus Defence and Space, that is so committed to working with educators and young people to enthuse the next generation of scientists and engineers."

We're really looking forward to working with schools, colleges and other partners across the country to make the most of this opportunity."

John Gourd Chairman of Hertfordshire LEP said: "We are delighted to support this unique educational project which reinforces Hertfordshire's priority on promoting Science Technology Engineering and Maths – i.e. STEM – subjects for the future. Not only will this initiative inspire a new generation of scientists, we hope it will encourage more young people locally to undertake high level qualifications/apprenticeships in order that future workforce needs for key STEM related sectors can be met."

Airbus Defence and Space's Stevenage site is a centre for the design and manufacture of spacecraft and satellites for telecommunications, Earth observation, navigation and science, as well as being where the European Space Agency's ExoMars rover will be built.

About Airbus Defence and Space

Airbus Defence and Space, a division of Airbus Group, is Europe's number one defence and space enterprise and the second largest space business worldwide. Its activities include space, military aircraft and related systems and services. It employs more than 38,000 people and in 2015 generated revenues of over 13 billion Euros.

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