



Bristol company helps Martian astronauts

SEA (Group) Ltd, with offices in Bristol and Bath, has been awarded a contract by the European Space Agency to help European astronauts to cope with trips to the Moon and Mars. Such missions are planned in the next 20 years as the culmination of the Aurora Exploration Programme. The motions of the planets and the laws of gravity mean that Martian explorers will be away from home for three years. Since radio waves travel at the speed of light conversations with families will involve half-hour delays (and we know how disconcerting the delays of less than a second can be in TV news reports from reporters using satellite links).

Human space exploration is a test of human abilities, extending our knowledge and understanding of human capabilities and limitations. In this study of Psychological Support Tools and Techniques, SEA will bring to bear its background in Human Factors Engineering and operational experience such as the needs of submarine crews.

This is the first contract awarded by ESA to any UK company in the field of human spaceflight in the framework of the Aurora Programme. Business Development Executive, Dr Chris Chaloner, said: "This is a very exciting project and with the statement on 3 January by the Space Minister, Malcolm Wicks reversing the long-standing UK Government ban on British participation in human space flight, we hope to build a long-term business in this area."