Welcome to Conversation 2023's factsheet 2

Conversation will be the 74th UK National Science Fiction Convention, or Eastercon. It will be held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole from 7 to 10 April 2023.

This is our mid-March summary of what we've been doing and what's coming up; we're intending to do this once more before Easter. Those of you who use these channels might already have seen this information on our website (https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/), Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/conversation2023), or Twitter account (https://twitter.com/eastercon2023), and will be able to find more news and updates there.

We've set out a number of our contact email addresses here, with a full list on the website (https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/contact/), but if you haven't got access to email you can write to us at the postal address at the end.

Programme: Scheduling links have now been emailed to potential programme participants. (If you haven't had any emails, please double check your spam folder but otherwise email programme@conversation2023.org.uk) On the Plan Z site you can confirm when you're available, accept or decline items for which you were suggested, express interest in other items, add a biography and other information.

Once participants and scheduling are confirmed, we'll make the programme available to see more generally before the con. In the meantime, look out for highlights being shared by the programme team! We'll be using ConClár via the Conversation website, as well as having paper programme information available on site. Programme is likely to start around noon on Friday 7 April, with the opening ceremony at 3 pm and the closing ceremony at 3 pm on Monday 10th (UK time zone: British summer time).

Online Conversation: Members will have access to almost all of the con programme streamed live online and for catch-up later, via personal log-ins to the convention website; there'll be more information coming soon. We'll also be opening the Conversation server on Discord soon – at least a couple of weeks before the con – so members can find out how we'll be using it during the con and chat about the convention there.

Art show and dealers: The onsite art show is now full (you can see some of the artists exhibiting on our website: https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/art-show/), but if you would like to take part in the virtual art show, please email art@conversation2023.org.uk. The onsite dealers' room is also full and already operating a waiting list; onsite dealers and fan tables may also choose to have a presence on the convention Discord after that opens.

Also at the convention… On site we've got plans for members to be able to participate in a games room, a Lego room, and rooms available for meetups; we'll also have various convention social spaces with (and without) food and drinks, not always including alcohol. There will be a lounge where masks are required, for people who want to hang out under those conditions, and separately a quiet room.

We're also planning for online meetup spaces, and some larger social sessions online (mostly UK evenings); if you're an online member and interested in hosting one of these sessions, please let us know.

Volunteering: Thanks again to everyone who's already volunteered. Please do let us know if you can help, using our form (shortened link: https://is.gd/UQZRbg) or by email (volunteers@conversation2023.org.uk) – and if you've done either of those things and not heard back from us, get in touch. We'd particularly welcome more help from online members, as well as general help on site during the con and with moving in.

Membership updates: People can join as online/supporting members until the end of the con, but advance onsite memberships will close after 31 March – including day memberships, which are now available at £50 for adults and £10 teen rate. Day rates include full online access to the con, so there's benefit to joining in advance; full attending memberships (£100, or £50 low income) and day memberships will also be available on the door. More membership information is available on the website:

https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/membership-and-hotel-rates/

We have a limited amount of money remaining in the participation (bursary) scheme which will allow us to make a few small grants for specific purposes. The deadline for applications for support to attend (on site or online) is Sunday 19 March 2023. Please see the website for further information:
https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/eastercon-2023-bursary/

If you planned to attend on site but are unable to comply with our Covid policy (https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/covid-policy/), you may request a refund of your membership by emailing membership@conversation2023.org.uk; by default Conversation 2023 will refund the difference between your payment and the cost of an online/supporting membership on the date you joined, allowing you to attend online. If you ask, we will refund your whole payment and you will not have access to the online convention.

Hotel update: We regret our room block at the hotel is now sold out and you can no longer use our booking code. It's worth checking the Hilton and other booking sites as there might be some availability after cancellations. If you are able to find a room at the Hilton advertised for our dates, we are very happy for you to book it; please then email hotel@conversation2023.org.uk to give us the booking reference, so that we can add you to our block. There is availability for our dates in other nearby hotels.

Travel: Travelling by public transport in the UK at Easter often means travel delays; we now know that, among other works (see https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/211606.aspx), services from London Euston station will be affected over the whole weekend (Friday to Monday), with alternatives in place. However, no train strikes have (yet) been announced after 1 April. There is more information about travel to the hotel on our website:
https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/getting-to-the-hotel/

For those driving to the convention, parking at the Hilton for Conversation residents is £10 per night; parking for non-residents is £14 per 24 hours. You can pay for parking when you leave the hotel.

Souvenir book: Like several previous Eastercons, we will be publishing a post-con souvenir book rather than a publication to be distributed at the convention. We haven't set a specific timetable yet, but hope it will all be completed in the summer. Members attending on site will be asked to opt for a paper or PDF version of the souvenir book, and we'll contact other members later. A volunteer will be taking photographs of Guest of Honour programme items in particular, to include in the souvenir book.

Sustainability: As well as trying to minimise paper waste from publications, we encourage members to reuse convention materials as much as possible. Please bring tote bags for use in the dealers' room (including spares you are happy to donate), and consider bringing a lanyard or clip for your membership badge; we will supply lanyards where needed, and pass along spare supplies to the next Eastercon. Our full sustainability policy will be available on the website imminently.

Policies: We've said that our Code of Conduct will be based on that for Reclamation last year, and the final version will be posted soon. This will apply alongside our other policies, including sustainability, access (https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/conversation-2023-access-policy/), Covid-19 and other infectious diseases, and health and safety. Information about our policies will be available to members on site as well as on the website; please note that the Code of Conduct in particular applies to all our members in social spaces and programme, on site and online, including before the convention.

Getting in touch: Some contact details are included in the relevant sections above. There's a list of all our contact email addresses on our website (https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/contact/), or you can email info@conversation2023.org.uk if you're not sure who's best placed to answer your query. You can find a list of our committee and staff (all volunteers!) on the website too:
https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/committee-and-staff/

If you prefer to contact us by post, write to:
Conversation 2023, 37 Coventry Road, Ilford, IG1 4QR, UK.