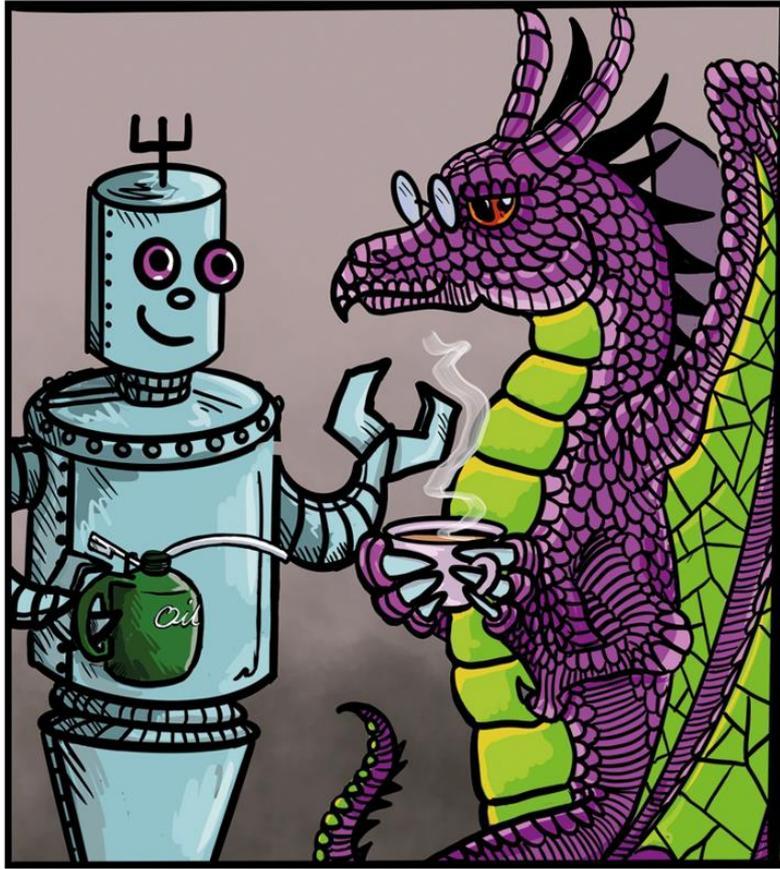


CONVERSATION



EASTERCON 2023

7-10 April 2023

READ ME
(larger print)

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An A3 map of the hotel is provided separately

Cover art by Sue Mason

Convention times (on site)

All UTC+1 (British summer time)

Registration

Registration is outside the Warwick Suite, near the Monarch entrance, and will open for pre-registered members once set up on Thursday afternoon/evening.

Friday: 9AM to 7PM – for all memberships, including new (full or day) members

Saturday: 9AM to 2PM

Sunday: 9AM to noon

Monday: 9AM to noon

Outside these hours, please go to the ops hub, in the Warwick Suite itself, for any urgent help needed with registration.

Ops (operations) hub

The ops hub will include tech ops, programme ops and volunteers and provide a range of advice and services for members. On convention days it will be open from 9AM; it will close on 11PM on Friday to Sunday and 7PM on Monday.

Dealers' room

Friday: 1 to 6PM

Saturday and Sunday: 10AM to 6PM

Monday: 10AM to 4PM

Art show

Friday: 4 to 6PM (preview only; no sales); 6 to 8PM (to meet the artists and/or buy art)

Saturday and Sunday: 10AM to 6PM

Con food

Available from around 4 to 9PM on Friday, and from noon on other days until 9PM on Saturday and Sunday and around 4 PM on Monday. More details, including hotel breakfast times, are on page 25.

...and online

Items will be streamed in real time, and we're expecting catch-up links for individual programme items to be posted by the next day. You need to be signed in via our registration site to watch the programme online.

Discord may be at least partly active all the time, since we've got members around the world in different time zones. People can catch up with comments and conversations there at any time during the convention.

The virtual art show will be available to view from the start of the con on Friday.

Message from the Chair

Welcome to Conversation 2023.

We are this year's Eastercon, the UK National Science Fiction Convention, held over the Easter weekend every year since 1955. This four-day event combines organised and social activity, supporting and challenging the genre we all engage with, and creating a community that continues through the years.

This Eastercon is brought to you by our Guests of Honour: Zen Cho, Niall Harrison, Jennell Jaquays, Kari Sperring, Adrian Tchaikovsky and Ursula Vernon; several hundred volunteers, including programme participants; our partners in SF – the British Science Fiction Association, the Science Fiction Foundation, the British Fantasy Society, publishers, dealers, creators and fannish organisers; and the hotel and online services that provide the spaces where we connect with each other and continue the conversation.

The teams for the 2020-2022 conventions organised the continuity of Eastercons through the Covid pandemic, and without their efforts this year's and future Eastercons would not be taking place. The Eastercon for 2024 is called Levitation, and there is a bid to hold the 2025 Eastercon in Belfast; please seek them out and play your part in maintaining this community into the future.

Thank you for coming to join us. I hope very much that everyone finds enjoyment in the mix of activities here.

Caroline Mullan
Chair

Eastercons could not happen without the help and support of many volunteers among our members, and in the souvenir book we will print as full a list as possible (of those who want to be included) of the people who helped.

The Conversation committee are Caroline Mullan (chair), Brian Ameringen (finance), Claire Brialey (co-ordinator), Steve Cooper (deputy chair), John Dodd (site), Karen Fishwick (access), Zi Graves (programme), Alison Scott (communications) and James Turner (tech).

The volunteers leading on particular areas are: Sue Dawson (social media), Jackie Duckworth (virtual art show and artist), Tim Duckworth (art show), Sue Edwards (green room), Flick (newsletter), Andrew January (website), Emily January (Discord), Pat Maher (ops hub), Sue Mason (artist), Farah Mendlesohn (dealers' room), Judith Mortimore (membership), James Shields (database), Martin Smart (registration) and Shana Worthen (guest liaison).

Around the hotel

The Hilton Birmingham Metropole is the venue for Conversation 2023; although some members attending on site will be staying in other accommodation, much of the information here will be relevant to everyone. We have set out how we are using the hotel in our map (provided separately).

Smoking and vaping are not allowed in convention spaces (including hotel restaurants and bars).

No signs or posters may be put up around the hotel.

The Hilton's check-out time is noon. The hotel has a luggage store for residents' bags; please see the ops hub if bag storage is needed beyond this.

Parking for members resident in the hotel costs £10 per day; pay at the hotel rather than using the parking machines to get this rate.

Wifi is available free in the public areas, including function rooms, and in practice this should work throughout the hotel. That said, if you have a very generous data allocation on your phone/tablet and are in a part of the hotel with a good signal, please consider using that for Discord and any streaming rather than the hotel's wifi.

Convention members who are staying in the hotel are welcome to use the health club and swimming pool without charge. Hilton's safety policy requires that children under 16 years of age must be supervised and accompanied in the water at all times by an adult over the age of 18; the minimum supervision required is one adult per two children in the pool at any one time.

There is a cash point (ATM) in reception – although this levies a charge for cash withdrawals – and at least one other in the NEC.

You can find information about food and drink provision in and around the hotel on page 25. The legal drinking age in the UK is 18; members under the age of 25 may be asked to produce photo ID when purchasing alcohol. Alcohol should not be taken into the Tea Lounge; no food or drink should be taken into the 'Mask Required' lounge, or into the Monarch Suite unless you are running a dealers' or fan table or on the art show or dealers team.

Please let anyone wearing a green sash go ahead of you at the bars, if you can; they will be from the green room, getting drinks for programme participants for the items coming up soon (see page 23).

Souvenir book

Like some previous Eastercons, Conversation will be publishing a souvenir book after the convention. We haven't set a timetable yet, but hope it will all be completed by the summer. Our default approach will be to provide this as a PDF document, but all members will be able to choose to have a paper copy (or none; households in particular might only want one copy in any format) if you wish. We'll be in touch about this later in the year.

We'd be happy to include advertising in the souvenir book and we'll set out rates, specifications and timing on our website later; if you want that information emailed direct to you, contact **pubs@conversation2023.org.uk**

We have a volunteer photographer in action at Guest of Honour programme items in particular, taking relevant photos to include in the souvenir book. Please co-operate if necessary, especially if you prefer not to be in the photos.

Accessibility

At Conversation 2023 no one needs to prove they are disabled, have a health condition or need accommodation; we want to listen to and believe you. We are therefore not using visible badges or ribbons for access needs. If you need assistance with anything please do ask a member of the convention team, either where you need the assistance or at the ops hub. (If you feel you need to give a reason for needing assistance you can say 'I am disabled / have accessibility needs / have a disability' or something similar that you are comfortable with, but please don't feel that you have to give medical or personal information.)

However, we know that asking for assistance can be difficult, whether for concerns about being heard or because we often need the most assistance when we can communicate least. We are therefore providing access cards with a variety of different wording. Please do pick up one of these at the ops hub if you think they will be helpful; we can also customise a card to your needs. Next year's Eastercon will be using the same system, so you can either return them to be reused at the end of the con or keep them for your own future use.

We also have lip reading and pronoun badges, which are entirely optional.

There will be priority seating in all programme rooms. Someone might need a seat in a particular area – perhaps at the front as they are lip reading or at the back because they are anxious. Anyone can sit in the priority seats, but if you don't have an accessibility reason for being there, please give up your seat if asked. We expect to have hearing loops in the programme rooms (usually in the front rows, which will be marked at the ends).

The hotel has assured us that the small steps in one of the corridors will have ramps in place, but if you are on wheels you might want to check when you are not in a hurry whether the gradient is suitable for your needs. There are alternate routes, but they are slightly longer.

We have a few mobility scooters available. If you feel that this would be helpful do let us know and we can sign one out to you for the day or the weekend. We will need some identification for this: not to prove that you need it, but just to confirm who is responsible for the scooter.

We ask all attendees to refrain from applying scented products while in the convention spaces, including toilets. It is fine to wear scented products, but please apply them in your own hotel room or outside.

One of the sets of toilets has been designated gender neutral; the locations are marked on the map.

We do not police who uses which toilets and expect our attendees not to do so either. We expect people to use the toilet facilities that make them comfortable and to respect others' need for privacy. We also understand that young children, or others who need assistance, will need to be in the same facility as the person assisting them.

Please read the access policy and access audit for the hotel for other accessibility information. If you require a large print copy of the programme guide or grids, or the policies booklet, ask at the ops hub. If you have any other access queries or needs, please post in the #help-desk channel on Discord or speak to the ops hub.

The convention online

Although this document includes a lot of information about the onsite convention, we expect that a lot of members attending on site (for just a day or the whole convention) will want to participate online too in a range of ways.

Programme streaming and catch-up

Nearly all of our programme items will be streamed, and made available for catch-up later and for some time after the convention. So if you're attending on site and want to see two things at once, or are helping out somewhere else, you'll still be able to watch the programme later. (And if you're on site but unfortunately unwell or isolating, you can still follow the programme from your room.)

All members, whether onsite attending or online/supporting, will have received an email enabling them to log into the registration site to find the links for the online programme. (Complex VPNs and ad blockers will mangle your identity for the site and streaming, so please turn them off for this purpose.)

Discord

Like several previous Eastercons – and a lot of other conventions you might have attended – we're using a Discord server to enable members to use text chat to communicate before, during, and for at least a while after the con; we hope this will bring together members attending online and on site to share some of the experience – and, of course, the conversation.

You should have received an email before the con inviting you to join the Conversation 2023 Discord server; if you haven't already done that, can't find the email, or are having some problems joining, please contact **comms@conversation2023.org.uk** and we'll try to help you get set up. The server is at **<https://discord.gg/come-to-eastercon-2023>**

There's a #read-me channel in the Discord too, serving a similar purpose to this one in telling you where things are and how to find and engage with different parts of the online convention. There's guidance about using Discord at

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/discord-guide/> which will also help you to get started (setting up your badge name and introducing yourself), and there are some specific channels in the server for different types of help you might need:

- #help-desk – general queries about the convention
- #hotel-queries – anything specific to the hotel that you need to ask
- #discord-help – help with the Discord itself, along with requests for additional emoji and affinity spaces

Social sessions

As well as text chat spaces, Discord also has spaces for audio and video chat. These are great for smaller meet-ups or just for hanging out with other fans. We also expect to have a Zoom social space available, subject to finding volunteers to look after it. Details of sessions happening in that will be on Discord.

Questions? Problems?

If you can't find the information that you need in this booklet and you have any questions or concerns, you can either go to the ops hub in the hotel or use the #help-desk channel in Discord. Most enquiries will end up in the same place!

In the Warwick Suite (near registration) you'll find the ops hub, with a range of member services; behind the front desk is a team of volunteers responsible for fixing things and resolving issues – whether that's convention operations, tech, programme scheduling and quite a few other things too. This will be open from 9AM until programming closes down, throughout the convention.

You'll see the ops hub referred to often here, since it is the first port of call on site – not just answering questions and solving problems but also handing things out and taking things in too. This includes lost children, who will be taken there for their parent or guardian to be contacted, and also lost/found property.

The #help-desk channel on Discord will be monitored for both online and onsite issues; questions and problems will be passed through to the team in the ops hub wherever relevant. Using this channel or going to the Warwick Suite (if you're on site) is likely to get a response much quicker than a social media post.

At all times, there will be a Duty Convention Manager (DCM) on call to deal with any problems that can't be easily sorted out in the ops hub.

In a medical emergency, call 999 and then tell the hotel, so that they can direct the paramedics. If you require first aid or other non-urgent medical assistance, please ask the hotel.

Another way to tell us about non-urgent problems is to come along to one of the daily feedback sessions. (On Monday this feedback will be for the benefit of future Eastercon committees instead.)

If you've got a concern or complaint under the convention's Code of Conduct (see page 12), or the matter you'd like to discuss is otherwise serious or confidential, you can phone or text 07761 634655 (+44 7761 634 655) to speak to a member of our listening team. You can also raise these issues with convention volunteers at the ops hub, who can take your report or help to contact a listener. The listening team includes both committee and non-committee members, and you can ask to speak to an appropriate person depending on your particular concern.

If you report a serious criminal matter, please be aware that we will be obliged to contact the police. We would, however, take into account any concerns you may have around involving them.

Don't hesitate to bring an issue to our attention, which might help someone else as well as you; we want all of our members to enjoy the con and to be safe. But please do remember that everyone helping to run the convention is a volunteer. (And if you want to volunteer yourself, see page 14 – and thank you.)

Code of Conduct and other policies

Conversation aims to be a safe space for the enjoyment of all of our members, on site and online; accordingly we have a Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct – covering our anti-harassment policy and issues including photography, recording, social media, tech and weapons – can be found at:

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/code-of-conduct/>

Any members who cannot access the internet while onsite can find a paper copy of the Code of Conduct at the ops hub, in a booklet (of which a larger print version is also available on request) which also includes our policies on Covid-19 and other infectious diseases, access, and sustainability, which operate alongside the Code of Conduct and can also be read online at:

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/covid-policy/>

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/conversation-2023-access-policy/>

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/policies/sustainability-policy/>

The committee reserves the right to take such actions as it feels appropriate if any member's or group's actions or behaviours are considered to contravene the Code of Conduct.

Several issues are drawn out from the policies here. We have aimed to draw the attention of all members to the full Code of Conduct before the convention. Everything in it applies to our members in social spaces and programme both onsite and online. You will also be directed to the Code of Conduct on entering the con Discord.

Information about how to raise a concern or complaint under the Code of Conduct is included on page 11. We will deal with any issues as promptly, efficiently, and fairly as possible, while respecting confidentiality.

Badges

Membership badges must be worn at all times in the convention's areas of the hotel, since people without them will be refused entry to the convention spaces. If you lose your badge, a replacement can be issued at registration, although a charge may apply.

Badges are available to identify artists, dealers and their assistants (including members with fan tables), in order to enable them to access the onsite art show and dealers' room in the Monarch Suite during set-up and pack-up hours; please speak to art show or dealers' room volunteers if you need a badge.

Volunteers checking relevant badges at doors may politely challenge you if yours is not visible.

You can find more information about the convention's support for accessibility on page 7. This explains our approach this year to having cards rather than badges for access assistance, with the exception of optional lip reading badges; everyone is asked to respect accessibility requests from fellow members.

Face masks

We encourage members to mask, for the protection of themselves and others, when in public and convention spaces (other than when eating and drinking). In general, please wear masks when approaching dealers and volunteers who are there to help you.

Remember that some people cannot wear masks for medical and other reasons. Members who wear masks should also be aware that some convention members are deaf or hard of hearing and rely on lip reading; they may not be able to communicate with someone wearing a standard mask.

We encourage you to wear a mask while attending programme items; guidance for programme participants themselves is included with the information about their schedule. When rooms are crowded, moderators may ask audiences explicitly to spread out in seating and to wear masks. Some programme items (e.g. dancing, singing, eating, drinking) will be tagged 'Mask Optional' and you will not be asked to wear a mask while attending these.

We will not enforce masking on anyone attending the convention except in the 'Mask Required' lounge, and we ask our members to respect other people's choices. Further information is available in our Covid-19 policy.

We have some disposable and FFP2/N95 standard masks (including lip reading masks) for volunteers and programme participants who wish to use them; ask at the ops hub or green room, respectively.

How to volunteer

Many thanks to all of our volunteers (all of whom, including the committee, have also paid for their memberships). Eastercons couldn't happen without you.

Most of the members who offered in advance to help out at the con will have heard already what we'd like them to do when – and some will already be doing it by the time you're reading this. If you hadn't heard from us about a specific role and you're still able to help, please pop in to the ops hub and let us know when you're available

and what sort of thing you're happy to do. Conventions always welcome more help and we're no exception; if you hadn't volunteered in advance but know now that you can help, please come to see the ops hub too!

In particular, it's likely to be useful to have more people attending programme items who are willing to take microphones around for question sessions or feed in questions that other members have posted in Discord.

We really welcome more online help too – which can be from members on site as well as online – and anyone can use the #volunteer channel on Discord both to offer help, in general or specifically, and to pick up any calls for volunteers there that people have already identified they need.

As thanks for volunteering, and particularly recognising the higher costs of food and drinks in the hotel while people are contributing time and effort to help, like other Eastercons we are offering 'groats' which can be exchanged at the food trucks, real ale bar, hotel bars other than Brightside, with most dealers and fan tables, and in the art show. Shift managers will note time contributed and distribute groats to volunteers.

We wanted to have a fair approach that recognises the help of all volunteers, including those helping before the convention and online, and so there will be some form of similar recognition to groats for online volunteers. We're also offering a choice of a T-shirt or a tote bag (featuring the convention robot and dragon resting after a job well done) to anyone who contributes at least 16 hours by the end of the con, including help in advance. We'll be in touch with all our volunteers about this after the convention.

Voting

The Doc Weir award is presented annually to celebrate a significant contribution to SF fandom which has largely gone unrecognised. You can read more about it (including previous winners), and vote during the con until Monday morning, at:

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/the-doc-weir-award/>

The BSFA awards will be presented on Saturday (6PM in Queens) and Eastercon members can vote as well as BSFA members. You can do that until noon on Saturday via **bit.ly/BSFA2022**; if you have any difficulties with the online form, please ask for help at the BSFA table in the dealers' room or on Discord.

There are races under way in two fan funds (the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund westbound to Pemmi-con, the NASFiC in Winnipeg; and the European Fan Fund to Konflikt, the Eurocon in Uppsala). In both cases you can either vote on paper and pay at the fan funds table in the dealers' room, or vote online:

<https://taff.org.uk/vote>

<https://fandomrover.com/2023/02/02/eff-race-begins/>

And as an Eastercon member you get to vote on the location of the convention in two years' time – with a bid for Belfast in 2025 declared so far. Come along to the bidding session at noon on Sunday and find out more.

News and reviews

There will be updates to information in this Read Me! Watch out for our newsletter, *The Daily Discourse*. If you have items to contribute to the newsletter during the convention, you can email

newsletter@conversation2023.org.uk, or drop them off at the ops hub if you're on site.

You'll also find a #photos-and-reports channel on the Discord server where you can share pictures or links or write at greater length – including about earlier items in the newsletter (see the information on pages 9-10 about how to get onto Discord). We really mean it about encouraging conversation...

If you write a con report, please let us know; we will publish a round-up of links soon after the con.

The convention's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/conversation2023>), Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/eastercon2023> – @eastercon2023) and Tumblr (<https://eastercon.tumblr.com/>) will also be monitored during the convention.

Art show

The convention art show this year will be in two parts: an art show on site and an online element. Some art in both may not be suitable for younger members.

The onsite art show will feature a diverse range of work by more than 25 artists, ranging from very well-known exhibitors to new talents. Please note there will be no auction this year: work will be available to buy throughout the convention (for collection at the end of the con – or at some other time by arrangement); you can also pay via our website using your debit or credit card.

This part of the art show is located in the Monarch Suite (next to dealers). There will be an opportunity to meet the artists and chat to them about their work, as well as to buy art, on Friday between 6 and 8PM. The show will also be open from 4PM on Friday for previews (no sales), and all day on both Saturday and Sunday from 10AM to 6PM.

The virtual art show includes work from both onsite and online members of the convention, plus a featured Illustration Gallery, an art shop for purchases, and behind-the-scenes 'peeks' of artists at work and of the onsite art show. Find it at <https://virtualartshow.squarespace.com> or via Discord – where some artists in both the online and onsite art shows will also have forums for you to chat. There will be tablets available in the onsite art show for viewing the virtual show, and QR codes which you can scan into your own phone to take you there.

We hope very much that you enjoy both halves of the art show.

Dealers' room

The dealers' room, including fan tables, is located in the Monarch Suite (next to the onsite art show).

Opening times for members are:

Friday: 1 to 6PM

Saturday and Sunday: 10AM to 6PM

Monday: 10AM to 4PM

Dealers and their assistants – identified by badges – will be allowed to enter an hour before opening and stay an hour after closing. (On Monday 10 April the hall will be supervised until it is empty, with move out to be completed by 10PM.)

Many dealers, including conventions and other fan tables, will accept groats (volunteer tokens – see page 15) in payment or part-payment.

In Memoriam

It is right that we remember, with respect and love, those whom we have lost.

It has become a tradition at recent Eastercons to name members of our community who are no longer with us, and Conversation will be doing that during the closing ceremony on Monday; we will also publish their names in the souvenir book later.

At the ops hub you'll find sheets where you can name people known to the Eastercon membership who have died since Reclamation last year. You can also supply names online via:

<https://forms.gle/46pdwn8CMeN1X1TV8>

(The form asks for their name, the month of their death if known, and a brief note of how we might have known them.)

There is also a Discord channel where members can post stories and memories about people we're commemorating this year who we remember at Eastercons.

Quiet room

If you need a little peaceful time out of the convention, we have a dedicated quiet room (Dorset) where you can sit and relax. Please respect other members' space and need for some quiet time too.

You might instead prefer to spend some time in one of the smaller sociable spaces, which include:

- the Mask Required lounge (Norfolk) – see page 27
- the craft lounge (York) – see page 24
- the Lego room (Kent) – see page 25
- the Tea Lounge (Henley) – see page 27

Programme

Our programme features all our Guests of Honour and many other creators and fans both on site or online. You might already have started using our programme guide in ConClár, which enables you to keep track of the items you'd particularly like to attend; you can find it at <https://guide.conversation2023.org.uk/>

A paper booklet is also available setting out the programme item descriptions, along with paper grids showing the schedule; you can collect a copy (or request a larger print version) at the ops hub. We have not provided these automatically to all onsite members, since all of the information is also accessible online.

Programme begins on most days at 9AM (noon on Friday, with the formal opening ceremony at 3PM) and closes by around 10PM except on Monday, where the closing ceremony at 3PM concludes Conversation's programme. Items have been scheduled in 90-minute slots, with the intention being that most will last for around an hour, leaving plenty of time for people to move around the site and for rooms to be reset before the next item.

As well as the activity spaces described on pages 24-25 you will find programme in these rooms:

- Queens (main programme)
- Pavilion (which has banquet-style seating)
- Wellington-Salisbury
- Gladstone-Churchill
- Balmoral
- Sandringham
- Sussex (for table talks and workshops)

You will need to be signed in via our registration site to watch the programme online, and will then also be able to access it through our Discord server. A few items (involving eating, drinking, dancing or

singing, or working with materials) will not be streamed or recorded for later catch-up, and these are clearly indicated in the programme.

Sign-up items

A few programme items – including many of those taking place in the Sussex room – have only limited space available and require advance sign-up. As noted above, not all of these items are suitable for streaming. Where they are, some will also enable online members to participate, with sign-up; in other cases, any number of online members will also be able to watch live.

In all cases you can sign up by using the online form at:

<https://www.conversation2023.org.uk/signup>

If you are on site with no direct internet access, the ops hub will be able to help.

In order to make participation in the table talks with our Guests of Honour – which are limited to ten people each – as fair as possible, places will be drawn by lot from all the members (onsite and online) who have put their names down by two hours before the start.

Saturday, 4PM: Adrian Tchaikovsky

Saturday, 5.30PM: Kari Sperring

Sunday, 1.30PM: Zen Cho

Sunday, 4.30PM: Niall Harrison

Sunday, 6PM: Ursula Vernon

Three of the workshops (Metal Clay, Recycled Jewellery and Recycling Fabric), which will not be streamed, require payment of a fee to cover materials; in all cases that can be paid on the day at the relevant item.

There has been an advance sign-up for the Metal Clay workshop in which there might be places left (click through on Saturday 8 April):

<https://www.londonmetalclay.com/booking-calendar/silver-clay-workshop>

Five places have been held for sign-up at the con, for booking through our form.

Places at the other workshops are also available to book through our online form, on a first come, first served basis. Tarot, Contract Skills, and the Criticism Masterclasses sponsored by the SF Foundation are all hybrid; Reading Aloud will be streamed for other spectators.

(Some of the) highlights

These panels on Friday each feature two of our Guests of Honour:

1.30PM: Illustration for Narrative (Jennell Jaquays and Ursula Vernon)

6PM: Writing about Game Universes (Jennell Jaquays and Adrian Tchaikovsky)

Guest of Honour interviews or other keynote items are scheduled at:

Friday, 4.30PM: Desert Island Books with Niall Harrison

Saturday, noon: Interview with Kari Sperring

Sunday, 10.30AM: Interview with Adrian Tchaikovsky

Monday, noon: Interview with Zen Cho

Monday, 1.30PM: Garden tour with Ursula Vernon (weather permitting)

Friday, 6PM: NewCon Press launch including Kari Sperring's *The Book of Gaheris*

Saturday, 1.30PM: Niall Harrison's book launch for *All These Worlds*

Evening entertainments – alongside panels and launches galore – include:

Friday: A special edition of *The Dark Room* (6.30PM)

Saturday: BSFA awards presentation (6PM); Glasgow 2024 ceilidh (from 7.30PM)

Sunday: Performance by comedy duo Prison Biscuit (9PM)

Other featured events include:

Saturday, 3PM: Hay lecture (sponsored by the SFF), given by Dr Colin Carlson

Sunday, 6PM: BSFA lecture, given by Dr Penny Goodman

Sunday, noon: Eastercon bidding session and business meeting

Please use the microphone offered if you are asking a question in a programme item, to help other people (on site and online) to hear. We encourage audience members to wear a mask in most circumstances while attending programme items; see our full Covid-19 policy, and summary details on page 12-13. Please keep mobile phones and other devices on silent while in programme on site.

Programme participants

Programme participants should have received information about their schedule via email, and can doublecheck items in the programme guide or by logging into Plan Z; those attending on site should also have received a schedule in your membership pack to stick on one side of your membership badge if you like. Additional guidance has been provided to moderators. If you have not received this information, please see programme ops in the ops hub.

The green room is in the Hampton room; programme participants are asked to check in there at least 15 minutes before your item begins, not least to meet up with other participants (including online participants who are streaming in) and order a drink from the green room team.

parkrun

parkruns take place at 9AM on Saturdays in most of the UK and other parts of the world. They are fun, inclusive events for anyone who wishes to improve their fitness. Eastercons have been organising trips to parkrun for a number of years, so come along and run with other fans, whether it's to add to your parkrun tourism tally or discover what parkruns are all about. All abilities welcome.

There are several courses near the hotel; a convention party will be heading for Babbs Mill. Sign up at the ops hub to go together and find out where to meet; there may be a small charge for transport.

Activity spaces

As well as the programme itself, there are a number of places within the convention where you can make your own entertainment.

Discord

The social category in our server includes many channels, with forums in the #entertainment and #daily-diversions channels. The former includes places to chat about books, TV, movies, and games; the latter offers a way to encourage one another not to let our streaks slip while we're having other fun and/or rushing around at the convention: collaborative jigsaws, Wordle, Duolingo, and possibly all human – and other sapient – life is here.

Games rooms

If you're on site and don't only want to chat about gaming, come along to the Lancaster room which is our Games Hub. We're expecting board games, card games, RPGs and more. In general, turn up and join in; volunteers can help to explain the rules and get you started where needed. When that all gets too lively – or you want to play a noisy game yourselves – there are two overflow rooms on the mezzanine (Windsor and Devon), for members who are able to use stairs.

Craft lounge

In the York room next to the Games Hub – but with no ancient rivalries being stirred up – we've got some space to practise, share and learn all sorts of crafts. There are a few scheduled workshops and meet-ups, and some materials will be provided. This includes custom papercraft models of our convention robot and dragon (papercraft design by Fold Up Toys); we'd love to display customised versions in the craft lounge as well as in the #craft channel on Discord. You can also use that channel to show off your other work (finished or in progress).



Lego room

The Kent room is not made from Lego but provides a place to use it. The Lego is on loan, so please don't take your creations (or components) away with you. But you can, of course, share them in the Discord #lego channel.

Food and drink

Con food

Food trucks will be outside in the VIP car park between Millers bar and the main entrance from approximately 4 to 9PM on Friday, noon to 9PM on Saturday and Sunday, and noon to 4PM on Monday. They will offer vegetarian options; vegan dishes will also be available in the hotel.

Hotel bars and restaurants

Breakfast is served for hotel residents during these times:

Weekdays (including bank holidays): 6.30 to 10.30AM

Weekends: 7.30 to 11AM

Millers bar/restaurant opens at noon and will close between 8 and 9PM depending on business (we advise making a booking). The Brightside cocktail bar closes at 11PM. The Gild Bar provides food and drink service at most times.

Real ale bar

In reception, opposite the main entrance, you will find a selection of seven real ales from local brewery Silhill – plus a special Conversation bitter, Talking Pint.

For cider drinkers a range of Dunkertons and Napton craft ciders are available in bottles and cans over the hotel bars, as well as their regular draught cider.

Outside the hotel

There is a range of chain and fast food restaurants nearby, in the Resort World complex on the other side of the lake from the hotel; food options in the NEC itself are likely to be particularly busy due to Insomnia also taking place this weekend.

The train station offers quite easy access to central Birmingham and its host of eating opportunities, with frequent services to Birmingham New Street.

Social spaces

Social space and refectory

The Princes Suite provides our main social space. Of course, convention members can use other hotel bars, but so can all the other hotel residents. There isn't a bar in Princes itself, but it's in the middle of the hotel and you can take in any food or drink acquired in the hotel or from the food trucks.

Tea Lounge

If you'd like to hang out in a smaller space where there isn't any alcohol, our Tea Lounge (in the Henley room) might be your preferred destination. It doesn't have to be tea; bring your choice of hot, or cold, alcohol-free beverage – or none! – and settle down for a chat.

Mask Required lounge

The Norfolk room has been set aside for use only by members wearing face masks. Entering this room without a mask (worn properly) will be a breach of the Code of Conduct. We ask people not to bring food or drink into the room.

Meet-ups

If you'd like to arrange an onsite meet-up for a community or other group (or any other meeting) you might want to use the Discord #meet-ups channel. As well as the social spaces around the hotel, programme ops (in the ops hub) can let you know if any of the smaller rooms will be free. Please tell the newsletter what's been arranged, to reach non-Discord members on site too.

Discord affinity groups

Affinity spaces are hidden channels for people who are part of a certain group to have in-group discussions. An affinity space could be based on identity, existing social groups, location, or shared interest. There are instructions in the Discord for finding and accessing the affinity spaces (and requesting new ones); please only join if you are a member of the group(s) in question.



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