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Jim Al-Khalili to delve into the mysteries of time at Guildford Book Festival

10 October 2026



Acclaimed physicist and broadcaster, Professor Jim Al-Khalili, will join fellow University of Surrey astrophysicist, Dr Noelia Noël, at the Guildford Book Festival for a conversation exploring one of science's greatest mysteries: the nature of time.

Taking place on Tuesday evening, 13 October, at Guildford Baptist Church, the event will centre on Professor Al-Khalili's new book, On Time: The Physics That Makes the Universe Tick.

The book explores questions that have puzzled philosophers and scientists for thousands of years, including whether time had a beginning and if it will have an end, why it appears to flow towards the future rather than the past, whether it can be stretched, squeezed or even reversed – and, at the deepest level, whether time itself is real.

In a conversation with host Dr Noël, Professor Al-Khalili will take audiences on a journey through physics, philosophy and cosmology, unpacking what modern science can tell us about something that governs every moment of our lives yet remains mysterious.

Professor Al-Khalili said:

"Time is something we all experience, but the deeper you look, the stranger it becomes. Quantum mechanics, relativity and thermodynamics all give us different ways of understanding what time is and how it works. That's what makes it such a fascinating mystery – we live our whole lives by it, yet there is still so much we don't understand."

Professor Al-Khalili is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Physics at Surrey, a Fellow of the Royal Society and one of the UK's best-known science communicators. He has written numerous popular science books, presented television documentaries and is best known for his long-running BBC Radio 4 programme The Life Scientific.

Dr Noelia Noël is a Senior Lecturer in Astrophysics at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics. She has received multiple awards and recognition for her work, including a prestigious 2026 Leadership Fellowship in Public Engagement from the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), recognising her contributions to astrophysics and sustainable space research, as well as her commitment to creating more inclusive pathways into science.

Dr Noël said:

"Jim has a wonderful ability to make some of the biggest questions in physics accessible, exciting and relevant to everyone. Time is something we all think we understand because we experience it every day, yet in physics it quickly becomes wonderfully strange. I'm really looking forward to exploring those ideas with Jim and sharing the conversation with audiences here in Guildford."

The ticketed event, Jim Al-Khalili in conversation with Dr Noelia Noel – On Time, is dedicated to the memory of Patricia Grayburn, in recognition of her strong and lasting connection with the University of Surrey.

Surrey University

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