

# Harry and Meghan's shock announcement: all you need to know

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 [theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/10/whats-next-for-harry-and-meghan](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/10/whats-next-for-harry-and-meghan)

The bombshell announcement by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex that they are to “step back” from senior roles in the royal family and work towards financial self-sufficiency has rocked the monarchy, raising complex questions from tax-payer’s support for the royals to the future of the institution itself. Here’s everything you need to know about the saga.

## Was the move a surprise?

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While the couple are said to have “pressed the nuclear button”, in some ways their announcement was not unexpected, having followed a period marked by open warfare with the media over claimed intrusion and bullying. Prince Harry and Meghan said the announcement came after “many months of reflection and internal discussions”.

They had already formally departed from the charity set up by Prince William and Harry a decade ago and the couple’s new foundation was due to be launched this year. More discreet steps were also taken last summer in the form of applications to trademark their brand “Sussex Royal” for a range of goods and activities.

However, the scale and form of the Sussexes’ initiative appears to have left Buckingham Palace reeling, particularly as the couple did not consult the Queen or Prince Charles before releasing their statement.

## What does it mean for the future of the monarchy and the Sussexes’ titles?

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Nothing, for now. Harry will remain sixth in line to the throne while there is no indication that his status and that of his wife will change.

However, scenarios have been floated in which that could change, either as a result of actions by the palace or by the couple themselves. There have been calls in some quarters for the couple to be stripped of their titles, although memories of the public reaction to the way in which Harry’s mother lost her title after her divorce from Prince Charles would surely weigh heavily on the palace.

## Will the taxpayer continue to contribute towards the Sussexes’ upkeep?

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On their website, Harry and Meghan say they will no longer receive funding through the sovereign grant, “thereby making them members of the royal family with financial independence”.

But while the couple say that grant only provides 5% of their income – a claim which royal aides have contested in off-the-record briefings this week – it also remains unclear whether they will give up their other sources of funding.

The Prince of Wales would turn off the taps on his funding of Harry and Meghan if they step away from their royal duties, according to a report in the Times. Money from the Duchy of Cornwall, the estate which is inherited by the eldest son of the reigning British monarch, funds the bulk of the couple's costs and results in Charles' sons receiving just under £5m a year.

The Sussexes' website appears to suggest they expect British taxpayers to continue covering the cost of their police protection officers. However, only senior royals tend to get police protection, so the role of the taxpayer in this regard is likely to become a matter of debate. Security experts have suggested that Canadian taxpayers could be on the hook for millions of dollars a year if the couple move there.

## **How will the Sussexes realise their stated aim of becoming financially independent?**

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The couple have other significant reserves to draw upon on top of their funding from the sovereign grant and Prince Charles. Harry inherited an estimated £20m from his mother, and about £7m from his great-grandmother. Meghan's net worth has been put at about £4m, having earned £37,000 per episode as an actor in the legal drama *Suits*.

The North American market appears to be at the fore of the couple's plans. Their new online presence appears to have been masterminded by a digital creative agency in Toronto, where Meghan lived when filming *Suits*.

Obvious sources of future income include the sale of Sussex Royal trade marked items ranging from clothing to stationery, book deals and public speaking appearances at events for which the couple could command six-figure sums.

## **Who is advising them?**

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Key figures include Sara Latham, the couple's communications secretary who worked for the Clintons in the US, and Natalie Campbell, who last year became their director of insight and innovation after moving from her role as an aide to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Other figures now associated with Harry and Meghan include recently appointed directors of their foundation. These include Stefan Paul Allesch-Taylor, a financier behind a number of coffee brands, as well as the entrepreneur Steven Cooper, the former Desert Island Discs host Kirsty Young and the media executive Karen Blackett.

In the legal realm – where the couple are taking action against the publisher of the Mail on Sunday after the newspaper published a handwritten letter Meghan had sent to her estranged father – they have recruited the services of the London-based libel specialists Schillings.

## What has been the role and reaction of the Queen?

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While Meghan has gone to Canada with the couple's son, Archie, the head of state is reported to have asked staff to find a "workable solution" and has been in contact with Charles and William.

However, in what was interpreted last month as a hint of a rift, Royal watchers keenly noted that the Queen failed to include a photo of Harry, Meghan or Archie at her desk during her pre-recorded Christmas Day speech.

A potentially interesting future flashpoint could come, say experts, if the Queen refuses to give consent to the use of "Royal" in future trademark applications by the couple.

## What impact have the events of this week had on public opinion?

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A poll of 1,327 Britons found that 45% supported the Sussexes' decision to step away from royal life but almost two-thirds (63%) believed their Duchy of Cornwall funding should end.

In what is likely to be a disappointment to republicans, the survey of 1,320 adults by YouGov found that almost half of people do not think it will have an impact on the wider reputation of the royal family.

A total of 49% of people questioned thought the decision would not have an effect, compared with 32% who think it will. Prince Harry is ranked by YouGov as the UK's second most popular royal, after the Queen and just ahead of his brother, while Meghan is ranked as number eight.

## Are there any precedents for what the Sussexes are doing?

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The Earl and Countess of Wessex ran into difficulties as they attempted to combine royal duties with their business interests in television and public relations after the Queen's youngest child and his wife were accused of cashing in on their status.

Sophie Wessex was hit in a tabloid newspaper sting in 2001, when she was recorded making comments about the royals and senior politicians in a pitch for business, while the following year she and her husband quit their business interests to focus on royal duties.

Some have likened this week's events to the abdication crisis of 1936, with Meghan being compared to another US divorcee and supposed disrupter of the royal order, Wallis Simpson. At a time when it was considered that the British public would never accept Simpson as Queen, Edward VIII had to choose between her and the throne, eventually opting to relinquish all royal duties. By contrast, Harry and Meghan plan to continue with duties and are not backed into the same type of corner as Edward was.

## **What happens next?**

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Talks and more talks. Buckingham Palace sources have said that the Queen, Charles, William and Harry have asked their senior aides to work "at pace" to find a way to allow the couple to become financially independent royals.