# Anti-monarchy protesters face challenges over Durham Cathedral demonstration during royal visit



Anti-monarchy protesters from the campaign group Republic gathered in Durham on Maundy Thursday to voice their opposition to the visit of King Charles and the Queen to Durham Cathedral. The event, part of the annual Maundy Thursday service, saw protesters holding placards with slogans such as "down with the crown" and "not my King" nearby as the royal couple attended the religious ceremony.

The protest was met with challenges concerning the location, centred on Palace Green, the area outside Durham Cathedral where the demonstration was to take place. The protesters claimed they had initially been told by police that they would not be permitted to protest outside the cathedral. However, a spokesperson for Durham Police clarified that Palace Green is privately owned by Durham University, and that the protesters were advised to make arrangements with the university regarding access to the land.

Graham Smith, of Republic, described the situation as "farcical," stating: "They seem to have changed their tune. We were told by the police that Palace Green was going to be closed. Then we were told this morning we would be able to go in - but they have been trying to put all sorts of restrictions on us." He also expressed an intention to raise a formal complaint about how the event was managed.

Durham University emphasised its commitment to upholding freedom of speech and lawful protest. A university spokesperson said, “Durham University is committed to upholding freedom of speech within the law and the right to lawful protest. Having been approached by protesters on the morning of today’s event, we worked with them and with the police to ensure they could proceed with their protest at a mutually agreeable location, in a safe and peaceful manner."

Durham Constabulary reiterated its role in balancing the rights of protestors with those of local residents and worshippers attending the service. A police spokesperson commented, “Durham Constabulary is committed to facilitating lawful and peaceful protest in public spaces. Decisions about policing protests require a delicate balance between the rights of protestors and those of local residents and worshippers attending a religious service. In this instance, protesters were given advanced notice that Palace Green is privately-owned land and were advised to discuss appropriate conditions of entry with the landowner. After discussions with the landowners on the morning of the event, protesters were allowed access to Palace Green and their protest went ahead."

The visit to Durham Cathedral marked a change from previous years when the Maundy Thursday service had been held at York and Worcester cathedrals. Republic noted that in those past events, the group had not faced similar difficulties in exercising their right to protest. The situation in Durham highlighted the complexities that arise when protests intersect with private land ownership and public ceremonial occasions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.republic.org.uk/durham_university_in_free_speech_row_over_royal_protest> - This article corroborates the claim that Durham University introduced last-minute restrictions on the anti-monarchy protests and initially closed Palace Green to protesters, leading to accusations of an attack on free speech by the campaign group Republic.
* <https://www.republic.org.uk/charles_met_with_protests_at_durham_maundy_service_photos_and_videos> - This source confirms that King Charles was met with protests by the Republic campaign group at the Maundy Thursday service in Durham Cathedral, supporting the statement about the protesters and their slogans.
* <https://royal-insider.com/2025/04/17/king-charles-queen-camilla-maundy-service-protests/> - This webpage documents the presence of protests against King Charles and Queen Camilla during the Maundy Thursday service in Durham, matching the description of the event and the protest's location near the cathedral.
* <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/royal-maundy-protest-tickets-1279439902189> - The Eventbrite page supports the details about the protest event organized by Republic, including the date, location at Durham Cathedral, and the nature of the protest against the monarchy during the Royal Maundy Service.
* <https://www.republic.org.uk/durham_university_in_free_speech_row_over_royal_protest> - This source also provides details on Durham Police advising protesters that Palace Green is privately owned by Durham University and that discussions with the university were required for access, confirming the claims about the location challenges.