

Kilometres from the ashes of Grenfell Tower

British royals spend millions on palace improvements

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11 October 2018

The *World Socialist Web Site* has drawn attention to the recent publication of a cookbook framed around Meghan Markle's charitable efforts with local residents impacted by the Grenfell fire and Prince William's guest appearance on BBC One's *DIY SOS: Grenfell*. We described these initiatives as part of a broader charm offensive aimed at suppressing the social anger generated by the June 14, 2017, inferno that claimed 72 lives and occurred less than four miles from Kensington Palace.

On October 5 the *Daily Mirror* published a report that sheds additional light on the cynical calculations involved in these efforts. "Meghan Markle and [Prince] Harry can finally move into Kensington Palace apartment next door to Kate and William," the *Mirror* states, thanks to renovations at Kensington Palace underway since last year, with more than £1.4 million spent on repairs to the roof and new windows.

A major refurb of the palace was announced on June 27, 2017—just two weeks after the Grenfell fire, accompanying remodelling of Buckingham Palace—initially costed at £396 million. The Kensington Palace renovation started amid revelations that the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) authorised the use of flammable external cladding on Grenfell Tower to save £293,000—a decision that amounted to a death sentence for residents.

William's two visits to the *DIY SOS* site along with Meghan's "secret" visits to the Community Hub Kitchen, will have been carefully managed by the royal family's PR team as part of efforts to ensure a smooth transition into apartment 1, and prevent public anger from spilling over.

For 12 months the royal family refused to confirm that Harry would be moving into the palace. The couple would, it was reported, remain in Nottingham Lodge—described by the media as a "cosy" two-bedroom cottage on the grounds of the palace. This was all part of cringeworthy media efforts to present the royal couple as everyday people. The story of their engagement over a home-cooked roast chicken was endlessly recycled.

Five months later, and in the aftermath of Markle's cookbook and William's *DIY:SOS* appearance, the press has announced that Harry and Meghan will in fact be moving next door to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. The £1.4 million renovations for Harry and Meghan follow a £4.5 million renovation for William and Kate's apartment in 2014. It has 22 rooms, including two nurseries, three kitchens and three bathrooms.

Alongside this, the £2 million spent on the Grenfell *DIY:SOS* community centre and boxing gym is chicken feed. But there is more to come. Friday will see Princess Eugenie, ninth in line to the throne and who carries out no official functions, marry (baronet) Jack Brooksbank at St George's Chapel, Windsor. A modest affair compared with the £38 million squandered on Harry and Meghan's nuptials at the same venue in May, it will nevertheless cost the taxpayer over £2 million for security (in part because the couple insisted on a carriage ride through the streets) and £250,000 to clean up afterwards. The proud parents will spend an additional £2.8 million for the ceremony's two days of celebrations.

Homeless people have told the *Daily Mirror* that Windsor's Conservative council have told them to

clear their belongings from the streets on the wedding day, just as it did for Harry and Meghan's.

At Buckingham Palace, the ten-year renovation project is now costed at £500 million and rising. According to a report in the *Daily Mail*, "The Buckingham Palace revamp will see 3,000 metres of dangerous vulcanised rubber cabling ripped up."

While a half a billion pounds are spent to ensure the safety of the monarchy, for Grenfell residents it was a very different story. They were subjected to a regime of "managed decline" and neglect that saw the RBKC council and its Tenant Management Organisation create a death trap. Cheap flammable material, faulty electrical wiring, no sprinklers or central fire alarm—a program of social cleansing and "regeneration" in the interests of the rich.



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