

## Keegan & Ashley in surprise talks

Contributed by Nelson  
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Former Newcastle boss Kevin Keegan has met the club's owner Mike Ashley for talks just eight days after his surprise departure from St James' Park. The League Managers' Association, which is in contact with Keegan, said the talks covered several issues, but did not reach a "satisfactory conclusion".

It was unclear whether the meeting was primarily to discuss a possible return or negotiate terms of Keegan's exit. Keegan, 57, quit after eight months in his second spell as Magpies boss.

Nicknamed the 'Geordie Messiah', fans' favourite Keegan stepped down as manager on 4 September after stating he had no control over transfer dealings. BBC Radio 5 Live football correspondent Jonathan Legard indicated Ashley may have gambled on being able to lure Keegan back at the talks in London on Friday.

"As I understand it the dice have been rolled by Mike Ashley, and they won't be rolled again with Kevin Keegan present," said Legard. He said it would require a radical restructure at the club for Keegan to consider returning.

"Kevin Keegan has to have overall charge of transfer policy and overall charge of first-team affairs. In that sense the talks were doomed," added Legard. Keegan's contract with the club is thought to have included a clause that whichever party broke it would owe the other £2m in compensation.

It has been suggested Keegan could try to counter this by pursuing a claim for constructive dismissal.

{xtypos\_alert}When news of Friday's meeting broke, some bookmakers responded by suspending betting on Keegan taking over as the next manager.{/xtypos\_alert}

Protests by supporters followed Keegan's resignation, with some laying the blame on Ashley and executive director for football Dennis Wise, who is believed to be largely responsible for transfer dealings.

And supporters angry at his departure and Ashley's running of the club are due to stage demonstrations before, during and after the home game against Hull City on Saturday.

As many as five separate demonstrations may take place in Newcastle city centre on Saturday.

Northumbria Police say extra officers will be on duty and have urged fans to vent their frustration peacefully.

Coach Chris Hughton has been placed in charge for the visit of Hull and has appealed to supporters to get behind Newcastle's players.

"We appreciate things may be difficult for the fans at the moment," said Hughton.

"But one thing Newcastle supporters are renowned for is their support of the team."

Following Keegan's departure Newcastle issued a statement insisting that Keegan was fully aware of his role within the club's management structure.

Keegan quit a day after West Ham boss Alan Curbishley resigned, also unhappy over his club's transfer policy.

On Friday, Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson said they "did the right thing" by leaving.

"You must have your pride and you must have control," said Ferguson.

Newcastle have yet to comment on the talks between Ashley and Keegan.