

- **Duke now said to recognise friendship was 'unwise'**
- **Former Scotland Yard royalty protection chief: 'Prince Andrew is bringing the royal family into disrepute'**

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Prince Andrew has promised to sever his controversial links with child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The Duke of York has finally admitted that meeting the disgraced billionaire recently was 'unwise' and has ruled out further visits to the Florida mansion where Epstein sexually exploited underage girls.

In a warning that may have come from the Queen, the duke's aides have advised him that his continued association with the paedophile risked damaging the reputation of the monarchy.

Now the humiliated duke, the fourth in line to the throne, has backed down and cut ties with Epstein, 58, in the hope that he can draw a line under the sordid association.

An impeccably-placed source said yesterday: 'The duke recognises now that the meeting in December 2010, after Epstein's conviction, was unwise.'

It was not clear last night if Andrew, a UK trade envoy, has acted before fresh revelations about the friendship are made public.

Earlier this week, in a rare move, his conduct was raised on the floor of the House of Commons.

But, whatever the motivation, his decision to sever ties with an old friend is a tacit admission that he has got it wrong with his choice of friends.