



News & Opinion | S

Sport

Business & Recruitment

Going Out

Business Directory

Classified Ads

Family Notices

Property

Pix



- [Latest news](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Editorial](#)
- [Your letters](#)
- [Your texts](#)
- [Blog](#)

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News & Opinion

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Taylor's comments 'dont go far enough'

North Belfast News

Aine McEntee

The family of Kitty Irvine, who lost her life in the McGurk's Bar atrocity, have hit out at former Stormont Ulster Unionist minister John Taylor after he declined to apologise for comments he made in the aftermath of the loyalist no warning bombing.

The Ulster Unionist life peer, now known as Lord Kilclooney, insisted he wouldn't apologise for suggesting the bomb, planted by loyalists, was an IRA 'own goal', according to comments attributed to him in a Sunday newspaper last weekend.

"The information made available to me by civil servants, at the time, was that it probably did relate to IRA activity," the former Ulster Unionist MLA told the Sunday Life.

"However, other information has since become available and I have taken note of that but I must emphasise that at the time when I spoke in Parliament I was acting in good faith as a minister who was outlining the briefing given to me by respected civil servants," he said.

Four days after the 4 December 1971 bombing John Taylor in his position as Home Affairs minister from 1970-1972 said that "forensic evidence supports the theory that the explosion... took place inside the building".

The minutes of a secret military briefing dated December 14 1971, buried in archives but recently discovered by a family member, discussed how the lie was to be further propagated at governmental level.

"Findings which indicated that the explosion in the McGurk's Bar had been the result of a bomb in the bar (by implication, in transit there) should be publicized, possibly by means of a written parliamentary question."

Family members of those killed in the pub have requested that Lord Kilclooney make a personal apology and in May of this year wrote an open letter to him in this newspaper which was also posted to the House of Lords in London.

"I am extremely disappointed that he couldn't contact me personally because he has my full address, and contact details," said Pat Irvine. "We sent a copy of that letter sent by post and email to the House of Lords

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"These comments don't go far enough. The exoneration of the IRA is part and parcel of what came out of this, it wasn't my priority however.

"My main concern was that an apology should have been made towards the families about what was implied, which was that our own people were responsible for the bombing.

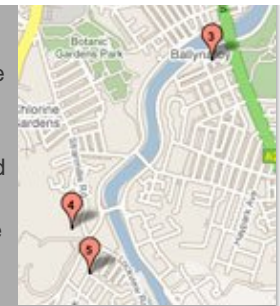
"I would like to know who these so-called respected civil servants are that told him what to say and I would like to meet them. He repeated these false comments worldwide, and its us he owes the apology to - the families."

Alec McLaughlin who lost his father in the bombing said he too felt let down by the comments.

"He's using doublespeak because he's saying he would do whatever he could to remove the pain and distress people suffered.

"An apology from him would considerably ease our pain," Alec said.

Whether it's an extension to a house or demolishing a building to replace it with hundreds of flats, planning issues are a hot topic in Belfast. And as part of our increasing interactive coverage, we're helping to put those issues on the map. "We're inviting readers to let us know about anything that's happening in their area by adding to our interactive map," said South Belfast News editor, Maria McCourt.



Events

The Belfast Media Group Belfast Business Top 50



Fifty businesses which fly the flag for the new Belfast are to be honoured in a special Stormont celebration this September, organised by the Belfast Media Group in association with BT. The Belfast Business Top 50 will pay tribute to the entrepreneurs and business leaders who are role models within their communities, creating wealth and jobs in challenging economic times. Nominations are still open for this year's Top 50.

