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Secretary of state objects to release of Poyntzpass killer

(Allison Morris, [Irish News](#))

The secretary of state has objected to plans to release Poyntzpass killer Stephen McClean from prison just nine years into a double life sentence.

The LVF man was approved for early release by the Life Sentence Review Commission earlier this month, after commissioners said they were "minded to allow" his application.

He and accomplice Noel McCready were sentenced to life for the murders of lifelong friends Damien Trainor (25) and Philip Allen (34) in the Railway Bar in Poyntzpass, Co Armagh in March 1998.

Relatives had expressed outrage at plans to release 37-year-old McClean, who laughed in the dock as he was sentenced in February 2000.

Sean Trainor urged Shaun Woodward to use his influence to keep his son's killer behind bars.

Mr Trainor yesterday (Thursday) welcomed the news that the secretary of state had objected to the release.

"He [McClean] has never shown any remorse for the heartache he caused and should be made to serve his full life sentence," he said.

"Hopefully, this will mean that he will stay behind bars where he belongs."

McCready (40) had also applied for early release but the review commissioners refused his application.

The LVF killers were the last two loyalist paramilitaries to leave the Maze prison when it closed in September 2000.

David Keys (26), named as the getaway driver in the Poyntzpass atrocity, was tortured and strangled in his cell in the LVF wing of the H-blocks in 1998.

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He had been accused of cooperating with police by directing them to the spot where the guns used to kill the Catholic and Protestant friends had been concealed.

Because the murders took place just weeks before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement the killers qualified for early release.

However, just days before their release date in July 2000 they were rearrested while on parole and charged with attempted murder.

Their early release licence was revoked after a challenge by then secretary of state Peter Mandelson.

A hearing in Maghaberry prison where McClean is being held will take place in the next three weeks in order for a substantive decision to be made on McClean's possible release.

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