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KELLY: PPS BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLAPSE OF TRIAL

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Commenting on the Police Ombudsman’s report into events leading to the collapse of the Omagh bombing trial in December 2007, SDLP Policing Spokesperson Dolores Kelly said the responsibility must rest squarely with the Public Prosecution Service.

She said: “Ombudsman Al Hutchinson concludes that the judge’s strong criticism of the two police witnesses was based on the evidence before him, but that evidence was not complete and he drew wrong conclusions about the truthfulness of the witnesses. At the time we resisted pressure to call for the suspension of the two officers, and we have been proved right.

“However, this does not take away from the fact that the presentation of the case to the court was flawed, and that is the clear responsibility of the Public Prosecution Service. Nor is this the only major case to collapse because of poor preparation and presentation. It also raised issues at the time about the quality of forensic training of police officers which has since been taken in hand.

“The people who really deserve an apology in all this mess are the Omagh families. The original Ombudsman’s report into the RUC investigation disclosed a catalogue of incompetence which added to their grief and they pinned their hopes of justice on the 2007 trial. They were let down again.”

“The Ombudsman said he had identified a number of issues and failings that require further consideration, relating to case preparation, documentation and disclosure. Insofar as they apply to the police the Policing Board will of course be following them up, but the real issue is to ensure that the Public Prosecution Service is fully fit for purpose.”

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