

Proposals to demolish Hilltown parochial house

We act on behalf of a number of survivors of historic sexual physical and mental abuse perpetrated by deceased paedophile priest Malachy Finegan.

A significant number of his victims either previously or currently reside in the wider Hilltown parish or were former pupils at St Colman's college Newry where Finegan taught for over 20 years.

We have been contacted by three survivors all of whom have a vested interest in the latest news about plans to demolish the parochial house where Finegan perpetrated much of his abuse.

Our clients include Sean Faloon and Tony Gribben who were abused in the parochial house and the school respectively. Another survivor has chosen to remain anonymous but is equally disturbed about the development. Mr Faloon suffered horrendous serial abuse from the age of 10 much of which occurred in the parochial house. Mr Gribben who was reared in the Hilltown area was abused in the college in the early 1970s.

They are all angry and disappointed that no one saw fit to contact them about this news. They each have a public profile after speaking out on their collective experience at the hands of Finegan. They are at a loss as to why they weren't contacted to appraise them of the proposals. It appears that decision making on the new plans has been undertaken without any recognition of Finegan's activities when he lived there. That abusive history really ought to have informed decision making on the destruction of that house. Sean Faloon's terrible ordeal ought to have been front and centre of any discussion on plans but it hasn't.

It was retraumatising for our clients to learn about the development in the media. Mr Faloon feels it was discourteous and utterly insensitive that both the Church and the relevant committee failed to contact him. It's well known in the entire wider community that Sean was abused on an industrial scale in that building and yet no one had the gumption to reach out to him about it. It points to either a deliberate re writing of history or worse, that Sean has just been forgotten about.

Hilltown parochial house was a hell hole for Sean Faloon and others. The inertia exhibited here by the church and the parish has served to reinforce suspicions that some people would just prefer to erase all memories of the parishes' very challenging historical links to one of Ireland's most prolific child abusers.

We have been instructed to write to the committee to take steps to remedy this obvious communication deficit. We are asking that due recognition be given to the suffering of Finegan's victims. Whilst our clients are respectful of the various other needs of school and community, they want it on the record that the historic suffering of children should be recognised as the primary reason for destruction of Hilltown parochial house.

Ends

Owen winters

KRW LAW