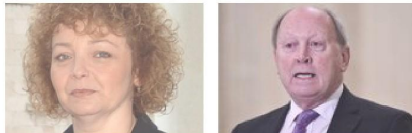


## Second Sinn Fein minister admits travelling to Storey funeral in ministerial car



Caral Ni Chuilin has been criticised by Jim Allister over use of ministerial car

Jim Allister



**Ralph Hewitt**

Wed 5 Aug 2020 at 07:00



A second Sinn Fein minister has admitted using their ministerial car to travel to the funeral of senior republican Bobby Storey.

Hundreds of people lined the streets for the veteran republican's funeral in west Belfast on June 30, despite the Covid-19 restrictions.

Several senior Sinn Fein members attended including Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Finance Minister Conor Murphy and Communities Minister Caral Ni Chuilin. Their attendance later sparked a row at Stormont, where politicians from other parties accused Sinn Fein of breaching coronavirus restrictions and undermining the Executive's message on Covid-19.

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- [Storey funeral probe not really independent at all, says Jim Rodgers \(/news/northern-ireland/storey-funeral-probe-not-really-independent-at-all-says-jim-rodgers/39417345.html\)](/news/northern-ireland/storey-funeral-probe-not-really-independent-at-all-says-jim-rodgers/39417345.html)
- [Bobby Storey funeral: Unionists aim to keep pressure on Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill \(/sunday-life/news/bobby-storey-funeral-unionists-aim-to-keep-pressure-on-sinn-feins-michelle-oneill/39415868.html\)](/sunday-life/news/bobby-storey-funeral-unionists-aim-to-keep-pressure-on-sinn-feins-michelle-oneill/39415868.html)

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Both Ms O'Neill and Mr Murphy denied breaching the social distancing measures while at the funeral. North Antrim TUV MLA Jim Allister asked both Mr Murphy and Ms Ni Chuilin if they were conveyed to the funeral of Mr Storey in an official Executive car through Assembly questions.



Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill has denied breaching Stormont's Covid-19 regulations and guidance by attending the funeral of Bobby Storey (Liam McBurney/PA)

Last week, a spokesperson for the Department of Finance stated that Mr Murphy had stopped on his way home "en route to official business in Stormont".

In Ms Ni Chuilin's official response, which has not yet been made public, she said: "I was collected from home on June 30, 2020, and taken to Bobby Storey's funeral in west Belfast by the ministerial car.

"I was later collected and taken to Stormont for Assembly business, including the final stage of the Housing (Amendment) Bill."

Mr Allister said that the transportation of Ms Ni Chuilin and Mr Murphy by ministerial car breached the coronavirus regulations at public expense.

"Last week the Finance Minister confirmed in a written answer to me that he was taken to the funeral of IRA terrorist Bobby Storey in his ministerial car," said Mr Allister. "Today, Minister Ni Chuilin has confirmed that she too was taken to the funeral by ministerial car.

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"While [Michelle] O'Neill now pontificates about the importance of wearing masks, at least two of her ministerial team were transported to a funeral at which multiple breaches of the coronavirus regulations occurred at public expense.

"The double standards and do as I say not as I do approach of Sinn Féin is nauseating and is made all the worse by the use of public money in this fashion."

Mr Allister added that the revelation that the two ministers travelled in their Executive vehicles "deserves attention".



Jim Allister

"There will be many who will note the contrast between the appeal of the Hume family not to go to John Hume's funeral because of the public health risks and the disregard which Sinn Féin displayed of the general public when it came to the Storey funeral," he added.

Sinn Féin was asked to respond Mr Allister's comments.

