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EVENING ECHO NEWS

Belfast: Search launched for missing man

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A major land, air and sea search was mounted today for a man who went missing on New Year's Day after he left a bar in Belfast docks.

Friends and family combed the waterfront for Martin Kelly, 21, from Holywood, Co Down, who has not been seen since he left Pat's Bar. They fear may have ended up in the water.

Ahead of the search they released 100 yellow balloons bearing messages to Mr Kelly as a symbol of his family's hope he may still be alive.

The plumber and part-time barman had gone to the bar with friends but stayed on after they left, and was seen leaving at around 7pm on January 1.

After releasing the balloons the family began a walk around Belfast Lough to Holywood searching as they went.

The missing man's brother-in-law, Paul Kelly said: "I think that we are coming to terms with the possibility that Martin may not now be found alive. But the family is also holding on to that little bit of hope that he is alive somewhere."

Last week the family criticised the Police Service for not doing enough to find Mr Kelly and said police divers had spent just one hour searching the waters near Pat's Bar and had not returned.

The PSNI said officers were searching for the missing man today on land, in the water and from the air.

A spokeswoman said: "We are working to establish the whereabouts of Martin Kelly and can confirm a dedicated search adviser and two police boats have been made available to assist the family search."

She said an air search was also being carried out around the shores of Belfast Lough.

However, police divers will only return to the search when they have completed the hunt for the body of a fisherman missing since his trawler went down in the Irish Sea off Ardglass, Co Down earlier this month, she said.

The skipper of the sunken trawler was rescued, the body of one of his crew recovered and the search of the third man continues daily.

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