

Johnson's Brexit plan: a document without honest...

Published: January 19, 2026, 12:44 am

I have tried to make sense of Boris Johnson's latest Brexit proposal. I have read the documents that have been issued. And like those who have done so in the EU, I am bewildered.

When the aim was no border in Ireland, Johnson has delivered one. And it will not work. Whilst the compliant will submit to the proposals the whole reason for border checks is that we know there are those who will cheat. Johnson's plan for checks away from the border provides no mechanism to deal for those who will flout the border for gain. At which point the plan, necessarily, fails. And that's before the politics are considered.

But not content with one border, Johnson has opted for two. The Customs border is in Ireland. The Single Market border is in the Irish Sea. The DUP have bought that idea. You might say, so what? It's very obviously where a border, if a border there has to be, was necessarily going to be located all along. But having two borders? What is the sense in that?

And then the DUP are given what is, in effect, a veto if only Stormont can be revived. Of all the bizarre ideas in a bizarre proposal this one is extraordinary. A pro-Brexit party reflecting one half at most of the community of Northern Ireland, where 60% voted to Remain, is not the organisation to give a veto to if harmony is sought, as is the plan for Northern Ireland.

This plan is a non-starter. If Brexit is to be done then a border in the Irish Sea is the only answer. The DUP and Tories have taken a step towards that. But a tiny one in a fashion that makes a mockery of honest intent.

I think we are no nearer a solution today than we have ever been. And maybe, given timescales, matters are worse.