

Johnson's manufacturing the excuses to begin expellin...

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:25 am

I wrote yesterday that I suspect Johnson will be culling the ranks of Tory MPs by withdrawing the whip from opponents over the coming weeks. It looks like his opportunity to do so will come very soon.

It seems very likely that the excuse to do this will be manufactured. We now know that a Bill to breach the Northern Ireland protocol, and so international law, will be presented to the Commons in the next week or so. No doubts three line whip will be applied and for some Tory MPs, and most especially those with legal qualifications, this will be decidedly problematic.

It is very hard for someone mindful that they might well lose their seat in a forthcoming general election and so who wants to keep their career credentials as a lawyer intact to vote in favour of the government unilaterally breaking the law, which is what the likely proposed reform to the protocol will do.

But, on the other hand, breaking a three line whip on what Johnson will define as a key Brexit issue will be as likely to be career ending. This will be an excuse for Johnson to withdraw the whip, and so the chance to stand as a Tory MP again.

Of course, to anyone but Johnson this policy makes no sense. For a start, breaching the protocol is unlikely to reform it, and so not deliver what the DUP in Northern Ireland want to get power sharing government working again.

The EU is not going to be amused. The US will be no more so. In fact, trade relations with both are likely to be seriously harmed.

But, that's not why Johnson is introducing his new law. That's being done to keep David Frost and the lunatic fringes of the Tory party happy for another day or two, whatever the consequences, with the added bonus that some opponents might be flushed out of the party as it crashes ever more rightward. For a Johnson those are all short term headline wins, and that is all that matters to him.

How did we reach such a dire position?

