

Coalition Update: 1-7 March

Legislation

[Ministers announce major climbdown on quangos](#) (*Times*, 1 March) **££**

A major climbdown on laws giving the coalition widespread powers to merge and abolish quangos announced: a section allowing the government to abolish any quangos listed on the schedule through secondary legislation rather than having full parliamentary scrutiny in the Lords or Commons will be dropped

[A nasty case of deja vu](#) (*Mark D'Arcy's blog*, 2 March)

Mark D'Arcy notes that the Lords are now hearing the Fixed Term Parliaments Bill: relations are prickly; and there is a technical issue in that this is not a bill which the Commons can force through by invoking their power to override the Lords via the Parliament Acts. Bills to extend the life of a parliament are exempt.

The Barnsley By-Election

[Humiliation in Barnsley fuels critics of Clegg](#) (*Independent*, 5 March)

Clegg engaged in a series of last-minute talks with senior Liberal Democrats in an attempt to head off a rebellion at the party's spring conference in Sheffield next week

[This by-election was a warning to the Tories, too](#) (*Independent*, 5 March)

John Curtice notes: the Lib Dems did badly, but so did the Conservatives

[The Lib Dems need to whistle their way through these dark days](#) (*Observer*, 6 March)

Andrew Rawnsley discusses the plight of the Lib Dems: notes Clegg's insistence on having ownership of all the coalition's policies; and his reluctance to trumpet behind-the-scenes victories

The Conservatives, the Coalition and Conference

[Look at what the Conservatives are achieving](#) (*Telegraph* 3 March)

Michael Fallon MP speaks: Interesting not least because there is no mention of the lib dems

[Cameron's battle plan](#) (*Telegraph*, 6 March)

Tim Montgomerie explains what Cameron ought to do: Keep the Lib Dems in the Coalition; Dramatise the Immigration, Welfare, Pensions and Education policies; Defeat AV and then restore law and order credentials; jettison the NHS and HiSpeed rail plans; go for growth; look after Pensioners

[The Coalition must clarify what it stands for](#) (*Telegraph*, 6 March)

The most fundamental problem is that the Coalition has not succeeded in articulating, in a clear and comprehensible way, what else it stands for. Curious conflation of Coalition and Conservative here

[The Party Manifesto, not Coalition Agreement, should most guide voting of Tory MPs](#) (*ConservativeHome*, 7 March)

Tim Montgomerie comments on a recent ConHome poll

The Lib Dems

[Greg Mulholland is first convenor of new Backbench Group](#) (*Mark Pack's blog*, 28 Feb)

A rebellious Lib Dem MP is now convenor of the Lib Dem Backbench Group

[Multicultural society row splits Clegg and Cameron](#) (*Independent*, 4 March)

Clegg takes different view to multiculturalism to Cameron in public speech

[Liberal Democrat rebels to challenge Clegg over 'damaging' NHS reforms](#) (*Guardian*, 4 March)

Evan Harris and Baroness Shirley Williams to challenge plans to hand GPs control of more than 80% of NHS budget at the Lib Dems' Spring Conference

[Everything you ever wanted to know about... Policy and the Parliamentary Party \(part 3\)](#) (*LibDem Voice*, 3 March)

Mark Valladares continues his discussion of how policy is made in the Lib Dem party: this post focuses on the impact of being in a coalition on policymaking, and the potential role of the Lords

Miscellaneous

[Nick Clegg provides a model and a warning for Ireland](#) (*Guardian*, 1 March)

Experience of Liberal Democrats shows Irish Labour party will need to retain a distinctive voice to avoid a collapse in support

[The town hall finance battle gets messy](#) (*Guardian*, 2 March)

The 'free council' concept raises more questions than it answers, with the Lib Dems and Tories bitterly divided