

Coalition Update: 8-14 February

Managing Government in times of coalition

[Coalition needs a new approach to collective responsibility](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 11 February)

Richard Morris discusses how the coalition interprets the notion of collective responsibility, so that members of the government, rather than just backbenchers, can be honest about differences in policy within the coalition.

[The spotlight begins to shine on the coalition's flaws and faultlines](#) (*Observer*, 13 February)

Andrew Rawnsley discusses how recent political events have shown up key coalition weaknesses. He claims that the coalition is a "top-down project" based on its reliance on David Cameron and Nick Clegg.

[David Cameron allows Nick Clegg to share his audiences with the Queen](#) (*Telegraph*, 12 February)

Nick Clegg has been having regular meetings with the Queen due to his position as Lord President of the Council, a job not usually given to someone with his Cabinet role.

The Big Society

[Nick Clegg out to wreck Big Society as David Cameron tries to salvage flagship policy](#) (*Mail on Sunday*, 13 February)

The Mail on Sunday claims that "Tory officials" have said that Nick Clegg believes the "Big Society" is a "waste of time" and that the term is not permitted in the Cabinet Office. Menzies Campbell calls the idea "BSE".

AV Reform

[Conservative peers help Labour defeat Nick Clegg over voting referendum](#) (*Telegraph*, 8 February)

Ten Conservative peers defied government instructions on a key plank of the coalition agreement and voted with Labour in support of a 40 per cent turnout threshold for the result of a referendum on AV to be binding.

[Pro-AV campaign surges to ten point lead](#) (*Independent*, 13 February)

David Cameron will give an anti-AV speech next week to refute suggestions that the Tories are planning to "soft-pedal" in the campaign against it. Poll gives pro-AV a ten point lead.

[Enter the Lords, bloody-minded and hellbent on mischief](#) (*Guardian*, 13 February)

Diary of a civil servant discusses management of the Lords from a Whitehall perspective

Civil Liberties

[Why we should believe Nick Clegg when he promises to restore liberties stolen by Labour](#) (*Observer*, 13 February)

Interview with Nick Clegg on efforts to improve civil liberties in Britain, in which he states that he is not completely happy with the final deal reached by the government, calling it "a good start". It notes his good relationship with Ken Clarke, and says the coalition needs openness in order to function.

Lib Dem unease with coalition policies

[Most Liberal Democrat MPs oppose coalition's NHS reforms, poll says](#) (*Guardian*, 8 February)

56 per cent of Lib Dem MPs said the NHS should not outsource more of its work to the private sector, according to a survey of all parties that included 13 Lib Dems.

[Lib Dem council chiefs speak out against cuts](#) (*New Statesman*, 10 February)

88 local Liberal Democrat leaders have written to The Times in what the New Statesman describes as "an unequivocal statement of discontent [that] shows that loyalty to the leadership is stretched to its very limit." It also notes the differing approaches to local governance of the coalition parties.

Lib Dem Electoral Strategy

[Lib Dems to target Tory votes as Clegg sees his constituency slip away](#) (*Independent*, 11 February)

"Secret papers" claim Nick Clegg will try to win the votes of "soft" Conservative supporters rather than tacking left at the next election. The news casts doubt on the likelihood of an electoral pact and could strain Cameron-Clegg relations.

Project Merlin and coalition differences on banks

[Senior Lib Dem sacked for criticising controversial deal for bankers](#) (*Telegraph*, 10 February)

Treasury spokesman and close ally of Vince Cable, Lord Oakeshott, resigned yesterday after publicly criticising Project Merlin.

[Coalition rift grows as Vince Cable calls for banks to be split up](#) (*Telegraph*, 14 February)

Vince Cable has called for British banks to be made smaller and less profitable, calling for "radical change" in defiance of George Osborne's call to avoid prejudging the Banking Commission report. Declares support for Lord Oakeshott and Merlin a "glass half full deal"

Conservative unease about coalition policy

[Conservative MPs are biting their tongues - but for how much longer?](#) (*Telegraph*, 8 February)

Simon Heffer discusses whether or not the Tories are a unified party, claiming that backbenchers have been "biting their tongues", with a lack of progress on developing a growth strategy and curbing EU powers their top complaints.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats

[Eight former Liberal Democrat candidates take part in Labour's policy-making process](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 12 February)

Mark Pack discusses why former Liberal Democrat policy director and Parliamentary candidate Richard Grayson is engaging in the Labour policy process.

[The Next Hung Parliament - How Labour Can Prepare](#) (*Social Liberal Forum*)

Matthew Sowemimo, former director of the Social Liberal Forum, discusses how Labour should approach coalition negotiations in the event of a hung parliament following the next election.

Miscellaneous

[A mission to reshape conflict states](#) (*Financial Times*, 14 February) **££**

The FT contains an interview with DIFID Secretary Andrew Mitchell, in which he states that he is comfortable in the coalition, comparing it to a new marriage, and denies he is to be made Chief Whip to deal with backbenchers unhappy with the union.