

Coalition Update: 8-14 March

The Lib Dems' Separate Identity

[Time to put party first](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 10 March)

Columnist calls for Lib Dems to "put the party first", claiming that this does not mean opposing the coalition, but drawing a distinction between government decisions and party principles.

[Nick Clegg: I told Cameron he was talking complete bilge](#) (*Independent*, 11 March)

The Independent contains an interview with Nick Clegg, in which he discusses a new phase in the Coalition in which he and Mr Cameron will not always use the same language to promote the Government's policies. He also discusses Lib Dem successes.

[Listen to your party, Nick, or the voters will punish you](#) (*Guardian*, 13 March)

Former head of Lib Dem policy Richard Grayson discusses Nick Clegg's need to listen to his party and change his approach to coalition politics.

[To survive, the Lib Dems must start pulling to the left](#) (*Guardian*, 13 March)

Jackie Ashley disputes the claim that the Lib Dems should operate from the centre ground, claiming that this is a crowded political space and that the party should tack to the left.

[We Still Have a Soul, Clegg tells his party](#) (*Independent*, 14 March)

Nick Clegg wants to reposition the Liberal Democrats from being a party of protest to becoming the voice of Middle England, with a "freehold" for the radical centre ground of British politics.

The Tory Backbenches

[Are the Conservative backbenchers in need of a leader?](#) (*Total Politics*, 10 March)

Columnist discusses the lack of organisation amongst the Tory backbenchers, asking if they need someone to knit them together.

[The 40 v the '22?](#) (*ConservativeHome*, 13 March)

Paul Goodman discusses the new backbench group, 'the forty'

[Loyalty and the Coalition](#) (*John Redwood's Blog*, 14 March)

John Redwood is critical of certain groups within the Lib Dems for focusing solely on the Coalition Agreement

The Labour-Plaid Coalition in Wales

[Labour split on coalition as Hain attacks Plaid leader](#) (*BBC*, 8 March)

Shadow Welsh Secretary Peter Hain has criticised the Deputy First Minister of Wales, calling him "ineffective", despite the Plaid Cymru leader being a coalition partner of the Labour government in the principality.

[Orderly break-up for Labour and Plaid after coalition](#) (*BBC*, 11 March)

First Minister Carwyn Jones has said that there is a "decoupling" going on ahead of the Welsh Assembly elections, with the coalition parties going their separate ways to campaign.

Managing Coalition Government

[Laws set for return to frontline politics in new Cabinet role](#) (*Independent*, 10 March)

David Cameron and Nick Clegg have reportedly discussed bringing David Laws to the Cabinet Office, to work alongside Oliver Letwin and Francis Maude. One source said this would help ease Nick Clegg's workload.

[Cameron abandons softy-softly approach to Whitehall](#) (*Times*, 9 March)

David Cameron has created a new 9-man team to co-ordinate government from Downing Street. The unit, which will also serve Nick Clegg, will be responsible for drawing up policies for the second half of this Parliament, to feature in an updated coalition agreement.

[Cabinet committees all male](#) (*ePolitix*, 10 March)

A Hansard Society briefing paper has concluded that there are no women on the cabinet's coalition committee or the coalition operation and strategic planning group.

Coalition Parties Contesting Elections

[Why Barnsley put me sixth](#) (*Guardian*, 9 March)

Failed Lib Dem parliamentary candidate Dominic Carman blames his placing of sixth on the coalition and the lack of a separate Lib Dem identity.

[Will we see a Tory-Lib Dem stand at election time? New rules to allow a Coalition candidate](#) (*Mail*, 11 March)

Conservative and LibDem MPs will be able to stand as joint Coalition candidates at the next election under controversial plans privately put in motion this week.

Lib Dem Opposition to NHS Reforms

[The NHS Comes First](#) (*Guardian*, 11 March)

Evan Harris calls on Lib Dem ministers to resign rather than push through NHS reforms that lack the support of their base and the medical profession.

[Nick Clegg in climb-down on NHS reforms](#) (*Telegraph*, 12 March)

Motions condemning planned NHS reforms were passed at the Lib Dem conference. Andrew Lansley is considering revising his plans.

[Shirley Williams urges Lib Dems to fight Andrew Lansley's NHS plan](#) (*Observer*, 13 March)

Shirley Williams calls the NHS reforms "completely misconceived" and calls for Lib Dem members to fight them. She claims Lib Dems should be prepared to rebel more than their Tory counterparts.

The AV referendum

[Another reason to vote No2AV: AV is part of the Europeanisation of British politics](#) (*Conservativehome*, 10 March)

Jonathan Isaby discusses Chris Huhne's claims that AV is a good thing because it will lead to the "Europeanisation" of British politics, where coalitions are the norm.

[Miliband and Clegg dispute causes cancellation of alternative vote event](#) (*Guardian*, 13 March)

A pro-AV event may not now go ahead following reports that Nick Clegg attempted to get himself on the platform in place of Charles Kennedy, against the wishes of Ed Miliband.

The Human Rights Commission

[Tories move to curb power of European courts](#) (*Independent*, 9 March)

Ken Clarke and Nick Clegg will this week announce the creation of a commission to consider the creation of a "British Bill of Rights", with Tories considering an opt-out from the ECHR to force reform, and the Lib Dems opposed to this.

[Lord Lester appointed to coalition commission to consider overhauling Human Rights Act](#) (*Mail*, 10 March)

Lord Lester is to serve on the coalition's review of the Human Rights Act, an appointment likely to upset many Conservative MPs.

[Lib Dems thwart Tory hopes of human rights convention withdrawal](#) (*Guardian*, 14 March)

Decision will infuriate Tory rightwingers unhappy at what they believe is Strasbourg judges' interference in UK rights

Ministerial Policy Differences

[Lib Dem blow to maternity leave relief for small firms](#) (*Mail*, 13 March)

Lib Dem ministers are attempting to block plans to permit small employers to negotiate with their employees over parental leave.

Miscellaneous

Liberal Democrats go into red for first time in history and decide to quit historic Cowley Street HQ (*Telegraph*, 9 March)

The loss of Short Money has meant that the Lib Dems are seriously under-resourced, forcing them to leave their headquarters in Cowley Street

Clegg must intensify his macho strategy (*ConservativeHome*, 12 March)

Paul Goodman claims that Nick Clegg's aggressive language of recent weeks, jokingly calling on him to use bullying and violence to highlight Lib Dem differences with the Conservatives.