

Coalition Update: 15-21 February

Life at No 10

[Tory MPs press David Cameron for cabinet reshuffle](#) (*Guardian*, 20 February)

Grumbles from Tory backbenchers over recent policy u-turns and politically unpopular ministers--Caroline Spelman, Ken Clarke, Francis Maude

[No 10 attempts to bring errant ministers to heel](#) (*Independent*, 17 February)

Cameron to recruit 10 policy advisers in recognition of recent mistakes which caught No 10 unaware: but also because of the extra pressures of a coalition. Suggestion that junior and middle-ranking Liberal Democrat ministers may also be allowed to recruit special advisers

[Downing Street's backroom boys want to save the Tories from themselves](#)

(*Telegraph*, 20 February)

Matthew d'Ancona: changes at No 10 mean the end of laid-back PM; to be replaced by rigorous oversight from the Centre

The AV Referendum

[AV referendum to go ahead without 40% turnout rule](#) (*Guardian*, 17 February)

Peers vote 221 to 153 to abandon its insistence that the referendum be deemed only advisory unless there was a turnout of more than 40%; Ed Miliband comes out in favour of AV, but will not campaign with Clegg.

[David Cameron may oppose electoral reform, but his Coalition will struggle to survive a 'No' vote](#) (*Independent*, 17 February)

Andrew Grice comments on the referendum, but the piece is more about the intra-party politics threatening both coalition leaders.

[Cameron and Clegg face off over reform to voting system](#) (*Independent*, 18 February)

David Cameron and Nick Clegg go head to head on plans to reform Britain's voting system – but with speeches that have been seen by each other's teams in advance.

[Coalition ministers get to take the gloves off](#) (*Observer*, 20 February)

Diary of a Civil Servant argues that actually the coalition partners have been restrained in their relations with each other--the "hard language of battle and war has been replaced by the soft language of deals and compromises"; the AV referendum offers politicians a license to act as they used to--in an adversarial manner.

[Four years good, five years bad](#) (*Epolitix*, 21 February)

Baroness Jay predicts another fight in the Lords over the fixed term parliaments bill.

DEFRA and the aborted forests sale

[Forest farce: Cameron to axe sell-off policy](#) (*Independent*, 17 February)

plans for a £250m sale of England's forests will be abandoned.

[State-owned forests live another day](#) (*The Economist*, 17 February)

Bagehot gives more details on the forests sale: this was a product of the bonfire of the quangos.

[Forest fiasco minister faces new humiliation](#) (*Telegraph*, 20 February)

Caroline Spelman, who presided over the forest sell-off fiasco, faces fresh pressure after it emerged her department could have to make new cuts on top of those already agreed.

The Identity of the Liberal Democrats

[Dominic Grieve is wrong – Lib Dems remain on the left](#) (*Guardian*, 15 February)

Richard Grayson responds to Dominic Grieve's comments that the Lib Dems have given up on left wing voters. Suggests that the party needs to publicly reject Grieve's comments; connect with various left of centre organisations; and differentiate itself from the Conservatives.

[Community politics: is it set to disappear as a core Lib Dem belief?](#) (*Mark Pack's blog*, 16 February)

Mark Pack is concerned about how little senior Liberal Democrats talk about Community Politics now. Is this being crowded out by the Big Society, or is it just because the Lib Dems aren't interested anymore?

[The Lib Dem Conference: motions on Strategy, Positioning and Priorities](#) (*Liberal Democrats website*, 18 February)

Two motions:

- The Federal Conference asserts that the Lib Dems will fight the next general election as an independent party without pacts or agreements and no preference for future coalition partners.
- To assist in the party projecting a distinct identity, LDs are urged to demonstrate publicly specific contributions made to government; develop a distinctive set of policies different from and independent of the coalition partners

Miscellaneous

[British bill of rights review imminent, says David Cameron](#) (*Guardian*, 16 February)

A coalition commission into the possibility of setting up a British bill of rights to be established; Tory backbenchers angered at recent human rights rulings; but Lord McNally, the justice minister and a senior Liberal Democrat, has said he would resign from the government rather than see the UK withdraw from the European convention.

[The Treasury growls as Nick Clegg pushes the green agenda](#) (*Guardian*, 17 February)

Allegra Stratton notes that while there are many pro-green politicians on both sides of the coalition, Treasury mandarins remain resistant to the idea of the Green Bank.

[An audit of rebelliousness on the Tory backbenches since Christmas](#)

(*ConservativeHome*, 18 February)

Jonathan Isaby lists the most rebellious Tory MPs.