

Coalition Update: 22-28 March

Lib Dem Influence on Government Policy

[Nick Clegg set to rein in NHS reforms](#) (*Guardian*, 22 March)

Nick Clegg has told a meeting of his parliamentary party that he will soon be "taking the lead" on revising the government's NHS reform plans.

[The Quiet Lib Dem Wins Continue](#) (*Politicshome*, 22 March)

A look at two Lib Dem successes this week. The first is securing agreement against a cap on student visas, attributed to Nick Clegg and Vince Cable. The second is a Home Office opt-in to the EU directive on human trafficking.

[Two wins for the Lib Dems in Government: human trafficking and visas](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 22 March)

Mark Pack discusses the recent Lib Dem "wins" on the subjects of human trafficking and student visas.

[Opinion: The Lib Dems should have more influence over the environment, food and rural affairs](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 22 March)

Paul Walter discusses the lack of Lib Dem ministers at DEFRA, DIFID and DCMS, claiming that the party is at risk of taking hits for policies it is hampered in influencing, outside of a Lib Dem committee on DEFRA issues, whose success is unmeasured.

[Lib Dems claim ownership of policies](#) (*Financial Times*, 23 March) ££

Senior Lib Dems have described the Budget as one lifted from "the front page of our manifesto".

[Lib Dems bringing home the bacon](#) (*Spectator*, 23 March)

Columnist claims that key Lib Dem constituencies, such as the south-west of England and remoter parts of Scotland, benefited from the Budget (gaining help with water bills and a fuel rebate respectively), with Nick Clegg's constituency in Sheffield being named an enterprise zone.

[But he's spending billions to shore up his Lib Dem allies](#) (*Mail*, 24 March)

Edward Heathcoat-Amory claims that the Budget allocated a disproportionate amount of money to Lib Dem priorities in an attempt to keep Nick Clegg in post and the coalition together.

[No wonder Nick Clegg looked miserable - There was little for the Lib Dems to cheer](#) (*Independent*, 24 March)

Mary-Ann Sieghart claims the Budget contained few Lib Dem wins, and that their one big success, the raising of the tax threshold, is a policy often used by Conservative Chancellors.

[Liberal Democrats in mutiny over benefit cap of £500](#) (*Observer*, 27 March)

Jenny Willott, the Liberal Democrats' welfare spokesperson, said yesterday that she was pressing ministers to alter the government proposal to cap benefits at £500.

[The Budget: the Liberal Democrats influence](#) (*LibDemVoice*, 23 March) Mark Pack discusses the influence of the Lib Dems on the Budget: he claims that the pension changes, raising of the income tax threshold and the green investment bank are all a result of Lib Dem involvement.

Lib Dem Internal Politics

[Nick Clegg orders rebrand amid rumours of a leadership challenge](#) (*Telegraph*, 26 March)

Concerned about a possible threat to his leadership, Nick Clegg is considering rebranding the party and has commissioned a "rethink" of Lib Dem strategy.

[Clegg's ministerial choices criticised by opposition](#) (*Herald Scotland*, 26 March) Opposition politicians in Scotland have criticised Nick Clegg's ministerial choices, claiming that they were responsible for some of the biggest gaffes of the coalition government.

[Scottish elections: Lib Dem candidate quits party](#) (*BBC News*, 27 March) A Lib Dem MSP candidate has resigned from the party, unhappy at its participation in the coalition and an alleged order not to speak out against it.

Maintaining Separate Identities

[Labour turn on Clegg's aside to Cameron](#) (*Independent*, 24 March)

Harriet Harman has attacked Nick Clegg after he joked that he and David Cameron would have nothing to argue about come the 2015 election.

['Lib Dems to change their logo, their name, their direction and their leader.' Really?](#) (*Telegraph*, 28 March)

Julian Astle rubbishes talk of fundamental change to the Lib Dem party

The AV Referendum

[A yes to voting reform could be death for Mr. Cameron](#) (*Mail*, 26 March)

Iain Martin claims that David Cameron's desire to protect Nick Clegg politically could lead to the Prime Minister losing the AV referendum - which many Tory MPs fear could mean they never form a majority government again.

[Coalition will survive AV vote](#) (*Independent*, 27 March)

Vince Cable has expressed his confidence that the coalition will remain united, no matter the result of the upcoming AV referendum.

[Tensions mount in coalition over gutter politics of anti-AV Tories](#) (*Independent*, 28 March)

Chris Huhne has written to Baroness Warsi to call on her to stop "scaremongering and misleading" publicity about AV

The Mansion Tax

[Cable confirms ending of 50p tax rate, and reveals mansion tax plans](#) (*Guardian*, Vince Cable has confirmed that he agrees with the Chancellor that the 50p rate of income tax is temporary. Talks are going on within government about a mansion tax to replace it.

The Centre

[Whitehall fears new era of spin under Cameron's media chief](#) (*Times*, 23 March) **££**
David Cameron's chief spin-doctor is to increase his power base significantly after the exit of two of the most senior communication officials in Whitehall