

Democratic round-up: the Prince of Wales

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*An analysis of palace records has shown that the Prince of Wales has held no fewer than 36 meetings with Cabinet Ministers on matters of his choosing. What are the democratic implications of a meddling monarch? And is HRH correct that he has a right to make his voice heard on 'any issues he chooses?' **Sean Kippin** takes a look at the best pieces of news, analysis and opinion since the news of Charles' meetings came to light.*



(Credit: sustainable sanitation, cc by 2.0)

What is the correct level of involvement in political decision-making for the next in line for the throne? Since the glorious revolution of 1668, English and British monarchs have generally hovered above the political fray, with the royal family declining to even vote in General Elections. While Charles's [political involvement](#) is apparently limited to lobbying on behalf of his own personal interests – such as architecture, climate change and alternative medicine, there is a concern that the Prince of Wales has become willing to use his privileged access to further his own political priorities.

Indeed, the political and constitutional reform select committee have resolved to take a [closer look](#) at Charles's supposed "royal veto powers", an arrangement which is said to give the Prince the opportunity to challenge any law which affects his 'private interests'.

The Financial Times carries a [comprehensive summary](#) of the Palace's response to the revelations, and the reactions to it. Graham Smith of Republic, the campaign for a democratically elected head of state, is quoted as saying that it is 'telling' that the Prince has only met with those Departments which mirror his own political interests. Robert Hazell of the UCL Constitution Unit thinks that the Prince's involvement 'oversteps the mark' but defends his right to take an interest in matters of state, arguing it is better to have a serious and engaged figure than a pre-reign Edward II-esque 'playboy' as heir.

Over at LabourList, Paul Richards, a former Special Adviser in the previous Labour Government, argues that Charles deserves the (fictional) accolade of "[Lobbyist of the Year](#)". Richards says that the Government should make

all Charles's correspondence with Government Ministers public, and let us future 'subjects' decide for ourselves whether the Prince does indeed have a 'duty' to meet with Ministers as he claims. Paul Flynn MP goes one further than Richards on PoliticsHome and declares Charles "[the most influential lobbyist in the kingdom](#)"; of course, [Lynton Crosby](#) might have something to say about that.

[Tim Loughton MP](#), the former Children's Minister argues that the future King offers more 'practical help' than those who seek to halt his political involvement and that accusations of lobbying and meddling are unfair and unwarranted. Loughton argues that "The thing about him trying to influence policy is completely wrong," he said. "I found him hugely beneficial to me, well-briefed and knowledgeable, with real life experience."

In the Daily Mail, [Dominic Sandbrook](#) argues that the 'magic' of the monarchy depends on the appearance of neutrality, which explains, in part, the public's 'love affair' with the House of Windsor, an affair threatened by Charles's lobbying. He warns that there is "no excuse for allowing private passions to interfere with his public role. If he wants to be taken seriously as a national figurehead, he must step back from politics."

For those that would prefer His Royal Highness spent the rest of his career engaged in more mundane tasks – [such as making strawberry tarts](#) – there is a an [e-petition](#) to remove him from the line of succession, though so far, it is not exactly threatening to reach the Government's 100,000 signature threshold for a debate in the House of Commons...