

PATCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report

27 January 2026

Action Points from Last Meeting (4 November 2025)

All council procedural matters minuted have been actioned.

- **.gov.uk email:** adoption in progress; Councillor Watney to provide an update.
- **Operation Watershed:** Exploration of a grant application; remains ongoing.
- **Highways:** Speed reduction on A280 achieved; focus now on reducing speed through the village.
- **Village Hall Redevelopment:** Planning permission granted for extension, accessible ramp, terrace patio, and additional parking spaces. Conditions include biodiversity enhancements and light control measures to protect the South Downs Dark Skies Reserve.
- **Financial Regulations & Grants Policy:** Adopted; precept held at current level.

All other action points have either been actioned or are covered under agenda items.

Local Government Reorganisation

The government's statutory consultation on proposals for reorganising local government across Sussex closed on 11 January. Options include:

- Option A: A single unitary authority for West Sussex.
- Option B2: Two unitaries – one covering Adur, Arun, Chichester, Worthing; the other Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex. This option is supported by all West Sussex district and borough councils.

A decision is expected in Spring 2026, with elections for new authorities anticipated in May 2027 and operational start by April 2028. Parish councils remain structurally unaffected but may see changes in service delivery and representation. We will continue to engage in stakeholder meetings to ensure parish interests are represented.

South Down National Park Local Plan Review - Land Availability Assessment (LAA)

The South Downs National Park Authority published its LAA in December. Several sites in Patching were put forward by landowners for consideration to take forward for allocation in the local plan for future development. All sites assessed in Patching were either **excluded** or **rejected** due to constraints such as location outside settlement boundaries and landscape sensitivity. No sites were identified in the parish as suitable for allocation.

in the Local Plan Review. This means there are currently **no development sites proposed for Patching under the LAA process**.

Planning Updates

A report covering planning applications and decisions is provided under separate cover.

Specific planning consultations responded to in the period, in accordance with the parish council's previous resolutions were:

- **Roots Allotments:** PPC submitted an objection to the retrospective application for three containers and CCTV installation, citing harm to rural character, biodiversity, and conflict with planning policies. Community feedback to a PPC consultation undertaken prior showed overwhelming opposition, with 25 of 30 responses expressing concern. The application remains to be determined.
- **Village Hall Development:** PPC submitted its support citing clear community benefits, conformity with national policy and SDNP strategic objectives, and direct support to Patching NDP goals to "safeguard and improve community facilities" in a sensitive, well-integrated fashion. Full planning permission granted for the proposed extension and associated works, subject to conditions on biodiversity net gain and light control.

Meeting Attendances

In the period I attended:

- A briefing session organised for parish councils to review the ongoing **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** proposals. The meeting provided clarity on the consultation process and the implications for town and parish councils. Key points included (as summarised previously in this report):
 - Preferred Model: Strong consensus among West Sussex district and borough councils for Option B2, creating two unitary authorities – one for Adur, Arun, Chichester, Worthing and another for Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex. This model is considered to offer better local representation and service delivery.
 - Financial and Governance Implications: The briefing highlighted potential cost savings and streamlined governance under the unitary model, while stressing the importance of maintaining parish-level autonomy.
 - Timeline: Government decision expected in Spring 2026, with elections for new authorities in May 2027 and operational start by April 2028.
 - Impact on Parishes: Parish councils will remain structurally unchanged but may experience changes in service interfaces and funding arrangements. The meeting encouraged parishes to prepare for closer collaboration with the new authorities.
- **CityFibre – Long Furlong Closure Consultation:** A 10-day closure is planned for April 2026 (likely 13–23 April) to enable fibre installation. Assurances have been

given regarding 24-hour gate control, emergency plans, and mitigation of diversion risks through Patching. A village hall consultation event is proposed, and publicity materials will be shared ahead of the closure. **Further steps to inform parishioners of the closure and to ensure the scheme promoters mitigate impacts** on the parish are for PPC's consideration under the agenda.

Correspondence & Other Matters

Parishioner correspondence of note includes:

- Reports of obstructions to **public rights of way**, adjacent Surgeon's Field. Councillor K Coleman has undertaken to discuss with the landowner.
- Following the pre-Christmas **Arundel Illuminated Tractor Run**, I wrote to Mr Paul Griffiths to acknowledge the regrettable damage caused to roadside verges in Patching due to the unexpectedly large turnout and associated parking. In my correspondence, I expressed appreciation for the proactive steps taken by Mr Griffiths and the organising committee to rectify the issues arising and arrange repairs through ACS Ltd, ensuring the verges were restored promptly. I also encouraged future collaboration with organisers to implement better traffic and parking management plans for future events, helping to prevent recurrence of such issues. My letter congratulated the rally's success in raising funds for local charities and the enjoyment it brought to many, while emphasising the importance of balancing these benefits with care for parish infrastructure.
- I have been in receipt of detailed correspondence from a parishioner, concerning ongoing **allegations of illegal burning of commercial waste** at the Fox Inn site. The reports include diary sheets, photographs, and video evidence showing repeated dumping and burning of waste materials, including hazardous items such as mattresses and refrigeration units containing harmful substances. Key points from the correspondence:
 - Environmental Health Response: Joanne Lewis, Senior Environmental Health Officer at Arun District Council, confirmed she has been forwarding evidence to the Environment Agency (EA). However, she expressed uncertainty as to whether the matter meets the EA's threshold for enforcement action.
 - SDNPA Involvement: Alan Hiron from the South Downs National Park Authority enforcement team has acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and indicated plans for a site visit.
 - Parish Council Role: The parishioner has granted permission for the Parish Council to share evidence with the EA. The Council has advised continued reporting and has referenced EA guidance on illegal waste burning.

I intend to seek further clarification from the Environment Agency regarding the status of their investigation and whether enforcement action will be taken. If progress remains unsatisfactory, PPC should consider escalating the matter by raising it with Beccy Cooper MP to ensure appropriate attention is given to this serious environmental concern.

- I engaged in discussions with Arun District Council (ADC) and subsequently the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) following concerns raised about the **demolition of the flint, brick, and slate outhouse** at the World's End Public House. Key points from these discussions:
 - ADC Position: ADC confirmed that the demolition was approved under the Building Act, which governs structural safety and demolition procedures.
 - SDNPA Position: While SDNPA acknowledged concerns regarding planning compliance and initially reviewed the potential for enforcement action, they concluded that since the demolition had already begun, enforcement was not progressed.

Parish Council Response: I expressed the parish council's verbal dissatisfaction with SDNPA's approach to planning enforcement in this matter. The council should now consider whether to seek support from Beccy Cooper MP to ensure that future breaches of planning control, of which there is now a catalogue of examples across the parish are addressed more robustly by the local planning authority.

Marc Pinnell

(Chairman 12 January 2026)