

PATCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report

5 May 2026

Action Points from Last Meeting (27 January 2026)

All council procedural matters minuted have been actioned.

- **.gov.uk email:** Funding has been provisioned and the transition remains in progress. Domain names have been secured, and councillors are migrating to the new email addresses.
- **Operation Watershed:** Exploration of a grant application; remains ongoing.
- **Highways:** Speed reduction on A280 achieved; focus now on reducing speed through the village ongoing.
- **Rights of Way** – Surgeon's Field: Following PPC lobbying and liaison with the landowner, installation of kissing gates to improve access has been agreed with the Public Rights of Way team. Monitoring will continue, with parishioners invited to identify any further access issues throughout the parish.
- **Tractor Run** – I have contacted the organisers and invited them to return now the ground has dried to further reinstate the verges.
- **Fox Public House** – I have written to Becky Cooper MP regarding the lack of enforcement action by the regulatory authorities across the parish.
- The parish council has corresponded extensively with Southern Water Services regarding reinstatement of the grass verge opposite the World's End. In latest correspondence SWS claim their contractors have no record of undertaking any works. The matter continues.

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

Local Government Reorganisation

Following the closure of the statutory consultation in January, the Government issued an update on 25 March 2026 confirming that it had not yet reached a decision on local government reorganisation in West Sussex. Instead of selecting one of the original proposals submitted by West Sussex councils, ministers indicated that they are considering modified options, with a further, short consultation to take place after the May 2026 local elections.

The proposed modification under consideration would retain a two-unitary model, but with a revised geography compared to the option previously supported by all West Sussex district and borough councils. Under this revised approach, Chichester District would move into a unitary authority with Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex, with Arun, Adur and

Worthing forming the second West Sussex unitary. The Government has indicated that the single-unitary option for the whole of West Sussex is unlikely to be pursued.

A further consultation is expected to commence after the May elections, with a final decision now anticipated in summer 2026. The overall timetable remains unchanged: elections to new shadow unitary authorities are expected in May 2027, with the new councils assuming full powers during 2028.

Parish and town councils are expected to remain structurally unchanged under all options. However, as previously noted, changes to district-level service delivery, governance arrangements, and points of contact are likely.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor developments and engage through briefing sessions and share with parishioners any updates as they become available.

South Down National Park Local Plan Review - Update

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) continues to progress its review of the South Downs Local Plan, which will replace the current adopted plan and guide planning decisions across the National Park to 2042. The review is intended to address priority themes including nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing, community facilities and placemaking, while ensuring development remains consistent with the statutory purposes of the National Park.

Following completion of the first public consultation (Regulation 18) in early 2025, the Authority has been analysing feedback from over 1,900 respondents, generating more than 3,700 individual comments. As part of this process, SDNPA has considered 28 newly promoted development sites and further representations relating to 38 sites previously excluded or rejected through the Land Availability Assessment (LAA) process.

SDNPA has confirmed that an updated Land Availability Assessment will be published later in 2026, reflecting this further evidence and engagement. This updated assessment will inform the next stage of the Local Plan Review, including whether any revised site allocations are proposed. The Authority has also indicated that it will undertake targeted engagement with town and parish councils ahead of the next consultation to explain any significant changes and gather local feedback.

The Parish Council will continue to track progress of the Local Plan Review and will report back to residents ahead of any future consultations affecting the parish.

Planning Updates

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

Specific planning consultations responded to 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. SDNPA – the local planning authority, made their determination on 18 March 2026. The application was refused. **Planning permission was refused** as the proposed three containers and CCTV camera were considered visually intrusive and inappropriate in scale and appearance for this rural allotment setting. Their industrial form and siting would introduce an urbanising and cluttered effect that harms the rural character of the landscape, detracts from views along the public right of way, and adversely affects the amenity of its users. The development was therefore found to conflict with South Downs Local Plan policies, Patching Neighbourhood Development Plan policies, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Park.

Meeting Attendances

In the period I attended:

- **A280 Long Furlong Temporary Closure (CityFibre Works)**

The village hall consultation event held on 27 March 2023. Subsequently,

The temporary closure of the A280 Long Furlong, required to facilitate CityFibre's full-fibre broadband installation under the UK Government's *Project Gigabit* programme, took place from **13–22 April 2026** and concluded on schedule.

The closure, implemented between Long Furlong Lane and the Patching North Roundabout, was subject to traffic management measures agreed with West Sussex County Council. These were to have included 24-hour gate marshals, maintained access for residents and emergency vehicles, electronic advance warning signage, and a trial digital traffic-management system intended to divert sat-navigation traffic away from unsuitable routes. Despite this, the strategic importance of the A280 generated significant disruption and public concern across the wider area.

Throughout the closure, the Parish Council played an active role in representing residents' concerns. I maintained frequent telephone contact with the road traffic management contractor and CityFibre to challenge emerging issues as they arose. This direct engagement resulted in:

- **Additional temporary signage within the village** to discourage inappropriate cut-through traffic.
- **Targeted action to reinforce the exclusion of HGVs approaching from Findon and using the Long Furlong route.**

- **The early reopening of the southern end of the closure** to allow improved access for residents, reducing local disruption during the latter part of the works.
- The road reopened on **22 April 2026**, in line with the approved permit period. CityFibre subsequently confirmed that the works were completed as planned and that further clean-up was undertaken prior to reopening.

Correspondence & Other Matters

Parishioner correspondence of note includes:

- I have been in receipt of further detailed correspondence from a parishioner, concerning ongoing **allegations of illegal burning of commercial waste** at the Fox Inn site.

Marc Pinnell

(Chairman 5 May 2026)