

Chairman's report May 2026

As I write this report, I am reminded of a quote from Leo Tolstoy:

"The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

Nothing could be more apt, as you will understand from the matters outlined below.

Over the past year, the Government has decided to devolve local government into Unitary Authorities, effectively merging District and County Councils. The process is progressing and, judging from experience elsewhere in England, is likely to place greater responsibility for local issues in the hands of Parish Councils. I am pleased to report that Shermanbury Parish is in a strong position and faces no significant unresolved challenges ahead of implementation.

I reported last year that planning was underway, in conjunction with Henfield Parish Council and West Sussex County Council (WSCC), to install an automatic flood warning system at Mock Bridge. Unfortunately, progress has stalled. WSCC have insisted on a more complex scheme incorporating diversion routes around the flooded bridge, and as a result, installation has not moved forward.

The proposed Rampion 2 overland cable route remains a concern, particularly regarding disruption during the construction phase. Liaison with neighbouring parishes will continue in an effort to minimise the impact, should the project proceed.

Planning permission granted by Mid Sussex District Council for three lithium-ion battery energy storage systems (BESS) sites near the Bolney Substation continues to occupy our attention. The absence of clear Government legislation governing these facilities remains a serious concern. Our MP, John Milne, has raised this matter in Parliament, although the Government maintains that existing safety guidance is sufficient. A Fire Chief has compared the situation to the regulatory failings preceding the Grenfell Tower disaster. Of particular concern is the site adjacent to the Royal Oak on Wineham Lane, which does not meet the latest National Fire Chiefs Council guidance, especially regarding the availability of water to manage a potential thermal runaway event. Shermanbury Parish Council will continue to press for full compliance with this guidance.

Work on the memorial wall at the Parish cemetery on Fryland Lane, providing a place for remembrance and the interment of ashes, will commence this month.

Illegal parking in informal lay-bys along the western side of the A281 remains a concern, particularly where it creates road safety risks. The Parish Council has secured a planting licence from WSCC, and the fire hydrant on the A281 is now protected by planting and no-parking signage.

Road safety continues to be one of our most significant challenges. On Wineham Lane, where much of the route is subject to a 40 mph limit, lack of adherence places walkers, cyclists and equestrians at considerable risk. WSCC acknowledge the issue; however, the cost of reducing the speed limit to 30 mph exceeds the threshold for action, and the Parish Council's offer to contribute financially cannot be accepted under current rules.

("The Community Traffic Regulation Order process has a financial cap of £5,000, regardless of any external funding contributions that may be available.")

The Partridge Green junction at Cornerhouse has been the site of two serious accidents in the past 12 months, one of them fatal. Despite the 40 mph limit—complied with by approximately 95% of drivers—speeds of between 71 and 93 mph (41 vehicles) have been observed on the approaches to the junction. The Parish Council's request to reduce the speed limit to 30 mph has been rejected by WSCC on the grounds that there are insufficient properties along the road and that current speeds do not meet the policy criteria for intervention.

WSCC Core Criteria for a 30 mph Limit

1. Frontage Development
 - At least 30 % of the route length must have development on both sides of the road, OR
 - At least 50 % of the route length must have development on one side of the road.
 - In villages, this is interpreted as about 20 properties with direct access along the route (within 600 m or 400 m).
2. Average Traffic Speeds
 - The existing average speed should be around or below 33 mph on the section under consideration.
3. Route Length Requirements
 - The recommended minimum length for a new speed limit (including 30 mph) is 600 m.
 - In exceptional circumstances—such as a compact village—this may be reduced to 400 m.

"Having reviewed the proposed section of road, there does not appear to be evidence of the above characteristics along its length, and as such the proposal does not meet the required policy criteria for a 30mph speed limit." WSCC

The Parish Council strongly disagrees with this assessment and will continue to press for effective speed mitigation measures on the A281.

As Horsham District Council prepares its new District Plan, the Wineham and Shermanbury Plan (WASP) must be updated to reflect national policy changes while protecting the parish to the greatest extent possible. This will be a major focus of the Parish Council throughout 2026.

Shermanbury Parish Council benefits from a dedicated team with a strong mix of skills and experience. I extend my sincere thanks to all councillors for their continued commitment and support—it is through teamwork that we achieve so much. We also value the support and collaboration of our District and County Councillors, whose engagement with local issues is greatly appreciated.

However, the future of our parish is not shaped by councillors alone. I encourage residents to get involved and help us carry forward the projects that make Shermanbury a better place for everyone.

Trevor J Brown

Chair, Shermanbury Parish Council 2026