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Hema Stanley  
Clerk Holford Parish Council

23 August 2021

Dear Hema

### **Notice of works – Quantock Common**

The Quantock Hills AONB Service is working on behalf of Natural England and the landowner to undertake works in the Sessile oak woodlands of Quantock Common. As you will be aware these woodlands are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for their special and rare woodland habitats. While the main component of the woodlands are the sessile oak trees there are a host of other species such as rowan and birch and lower shrub species such as bilberry that create the diversity and allow other rarer species such as the bryophytes and lichens to flourish.

Over the last 20 – 30 years the amount and density of holly has increased in some areas. Holly is an important component of the woodlands but at a lower proportion than other species of tree – ideally 10% or less. In some areas holly is becoming the dominant tree species and has eradicated other shrub species such as Bilberry and Rowan and reducing the ability of the oak to regenerate. In these areas contractors will be undertaking thinning works to reduce the dominance of holly. The works will include felling (by chainsaw), stacking of core wood on site to form deadwood habitat and removal of all brash from site.

While undertaking these thinning works contractors will also be removing any Rhododendron found in the combs. Rhododendron is an invasive species that will out compete native tree and shrub species. As it is evergreen it shades out the woodland floor reducing the ability of native woodland plants to grow. Rhododendron is also a host for a number of diseases, the most concerning of which is *Phytophthora ramorum* – a highly destructive algae-like organism. To date it is known to be infectious to 150 tree species including Rowan and Silver Birch and numerous shrub species including Bilberry.

The works are expected to start in October and due to the sensitive nature in which the works have to be undertaken, will take approximately 2 months to complete though contractors will not be in any one area for that period of time. If the parish council have any questions or would like more information on the works please do not hesitate to contact me.


Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Porter', written in a cursive style.

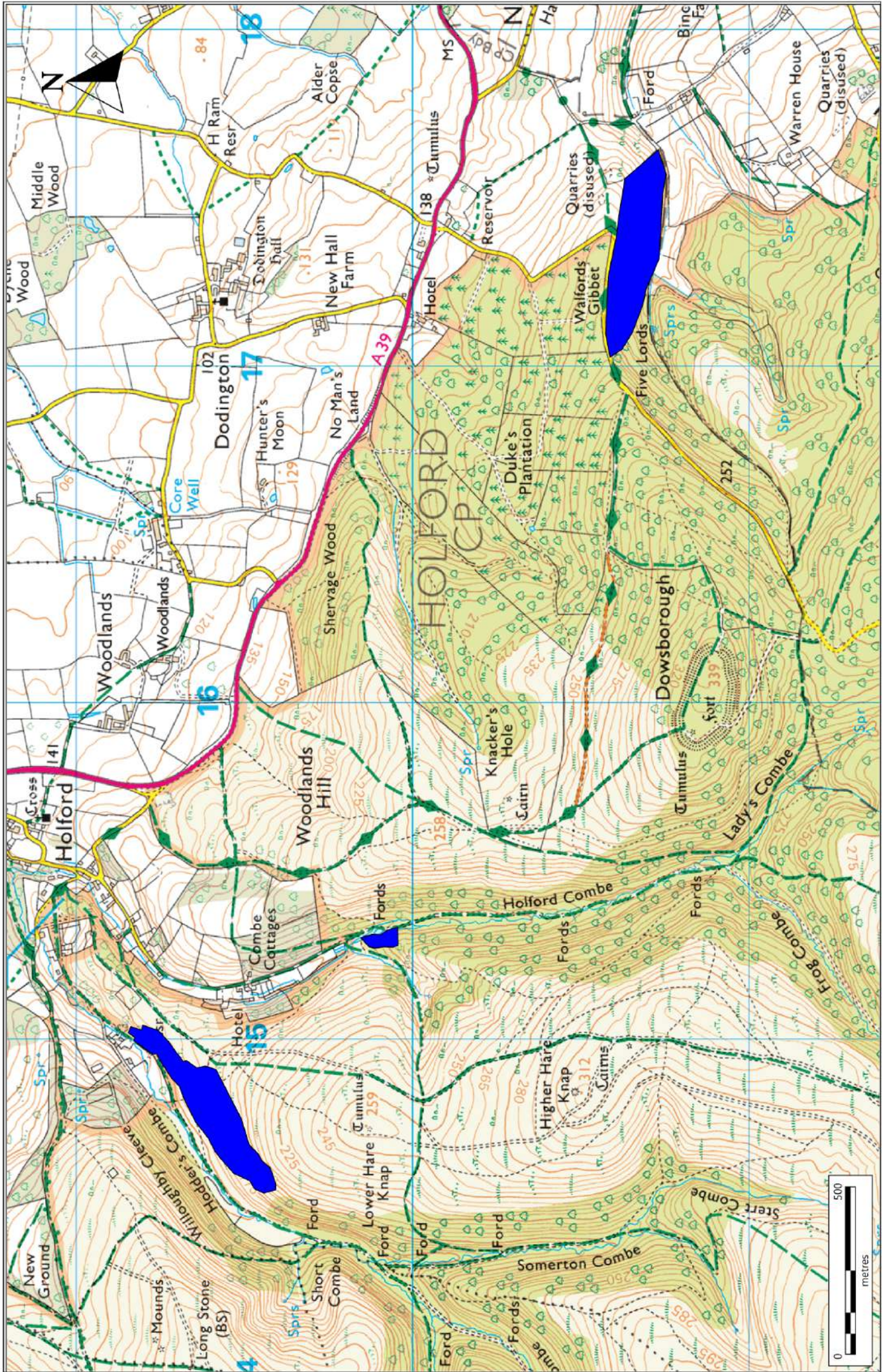
Iain Porter

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Scale: 1:10,000 @ A3  
 Drawn by: JP  
 Date: 04/05/2021

Level Up. SAC Woodland Project. Holly thinning areas (blue).



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