

Coker Division

Your January report from

Cllr Mike HEWITSON & Cllr Oliver PATRICK



South Somerset
District Council



SOMERSET
County Council



Working hard for you in Barwick & Stoford, Chiselborough, Closworth, East Chinnock, East Coker, Hardington, Haselbury Plucknett, Montacute, North Perrott, Norton Sub Hamdon, Odcombe, West Coker, West & Middle Chinnock

BALANCING THE BUDGET FOR THE NEW COUNCIL

In the context of soaring inflation, rising demand, and local government reorganisation, **we are proposing a balanced budget for 2023/24**. The budget is now out for consultation. You can read all about it and have your say here (deadline to respond 10th February):

www.somerset.inconsult.uk/budget/consultationHome.



The budget papers will be considered by Scrutiny Committee members on 1st February, Audit Committee members on 2nd February, and the Full Council on 22nd February.

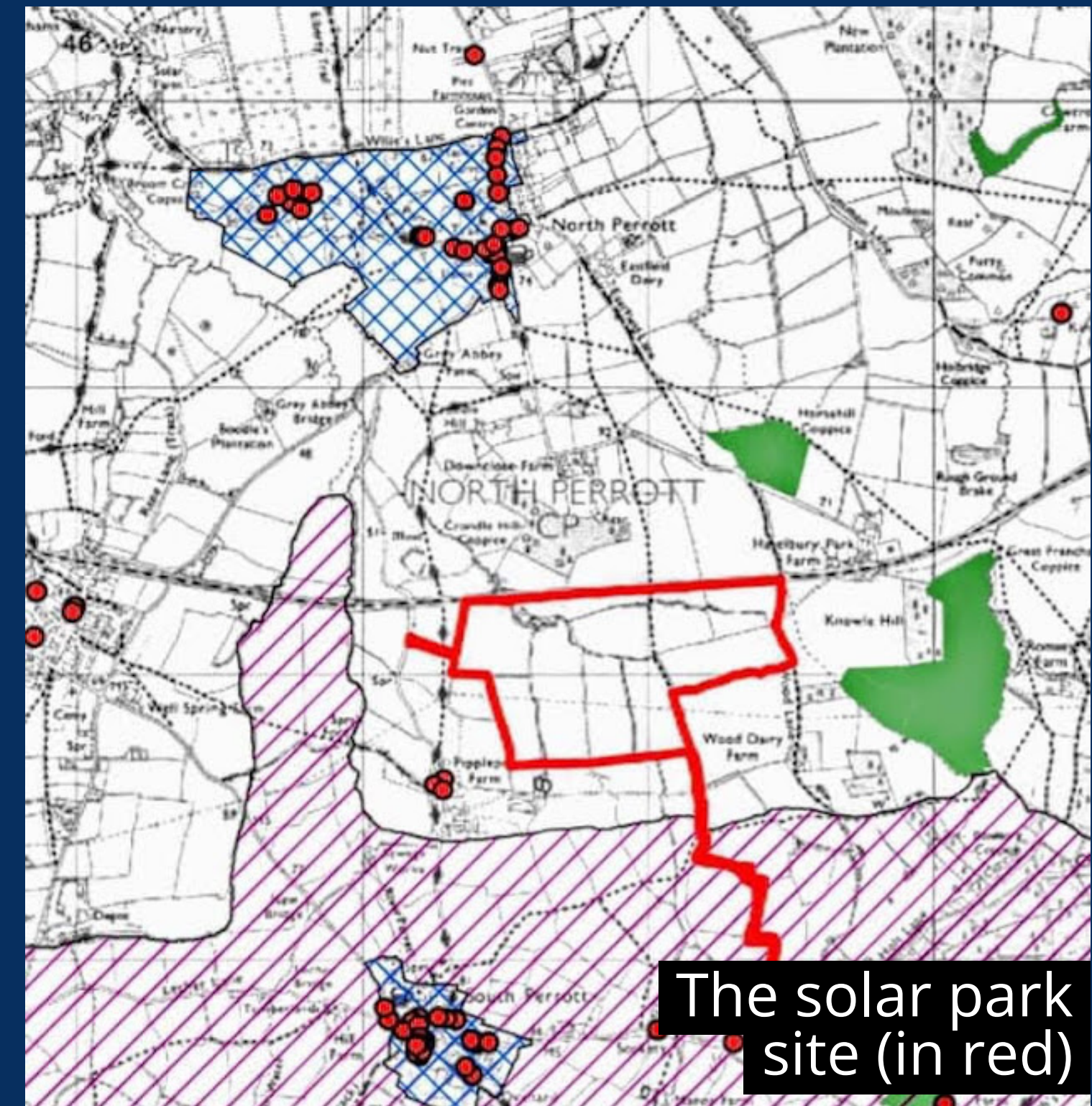
Cllr Liz Leyshon, Lead Member for Finance, said *“We believe that Councils have a contract with the public. We have used our best endeavours to protect that contract, having protected services such as the Household Waste Recycling Centres, the Libraries (both statutory and community partnership), the Voluntary Sector grants, Highways work on gritting, gully emptying, and grass cutting to name a few.*

“We still have much work to do as the years ahead are uncertain, but through sheer grit and determination we are laying the foundations for a successful new Council.”

NORTH PERROTT SOLAR PARK GETS GREEN LIGHT

The Solar Park at Pipplepen Lane near North Perrott was approved unanimously at SSDC's Regulation Committee meeting in January. Oliver attended the meeting as the Ward Member for Parrett (which includes the village of North Perrott). He spoke passionately in favour of this renewable energy project.

*"I understand the concerns of some who would rather see this application refused," said Oliver, "However, it's clear that the positives of this application far outweigh the negatives. **The fact is, if we are to meaningfully tackle climate change we need to build large scale renewable projects like this.** This solar park will generate enough electricity per year to power every house in Crewkerne and Chard combined. That means less reliance on fossil-fuelled power stations to keep our lights on. This is how we tackle climate change."*



CHINNOCK HOLLOW - an update

Chinnock Hollow remains closed



Unfortunately WSP has been unable to provide us with detailed costings for the various options laid out at our public meeting in October 2022, citing staff sickness over the Christmas period. **However we have been assured the report is due imminently.** The next step will be sharing this report with the wider community and then taking a recommendation to the Council's Executive for a decision.

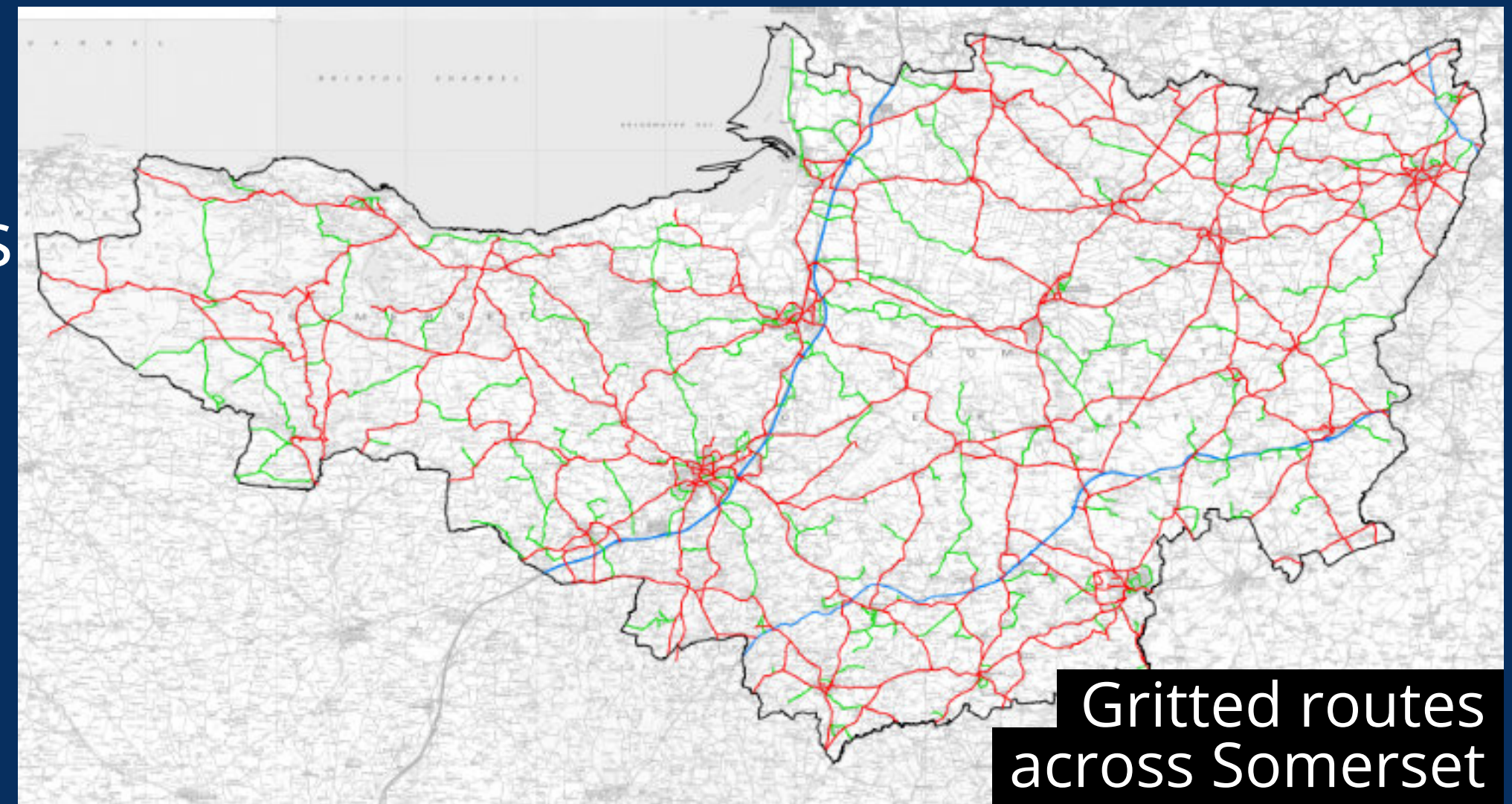
The holloways around us are continually eroding. Recently a great deal of sandstone has been shedding onto the highway, especially along the A30 between East Chinnock and West Coker. As a result, a recent safety inspection of West Coker Hollow recommended works to make the rockface safer. Whilst there is no imminent risk, preventative work will be carried out in the summer to reduce the risk caused by further erosion.



New warning signs in West Coker Hollow

GRIT & DETERMINATION

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Highways gritting team, over 10,500 miles of road were gritted during January's cold snap. The Council's current gritting strategy sees 21% of Somerset's routes treated, with A and B roads prioritised (the red roads shown on the map).



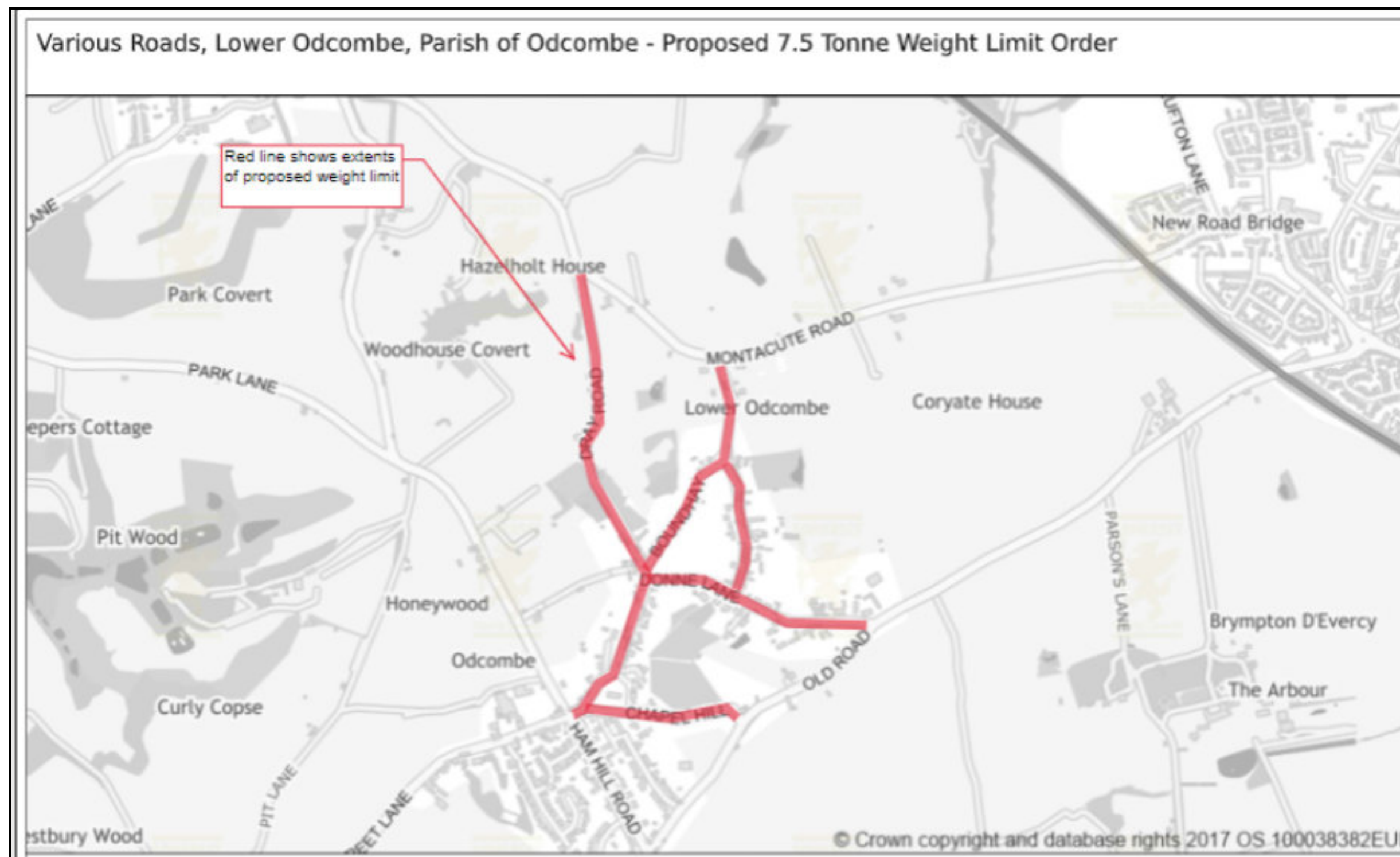
Gritted routes across Somerset



Oliver topping up grit bins across Coker Division

Unfortunately that means a lot of our local roads are not gritted. But thanks to the grit & determination of local residents who spread grit from the public bins, many of our villages got some treatment. *"In Somerset, Parish Councils own the public grit bins" says Mike, "so if your local bin needs a top-up get in touch with your PC. If you don't know who that is then get in touch with me or Oliver and we'll help."*

ROAD SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS Whether it's replying to residents quickly, getting potholes fixed, or helping grit the roads - Mike and Oliver are working hard for residents right across Coker Division. One such improvement is stopping HGVs using Odcombe as a rat run. The consultation for this (see pic) has now closed, meaning a weight restriction will be imposed on the roads in red.



*“If you live in Odcombe and you’ve been affected by dangerous or anti-social driving,” **says Mike**, “please get in touch with me or Oliver in confidence. We are considering reducing the speed to 20mph as an additional improvement to the village, but we need evidence of need first.”*

SEE IT - REPORT IT - MIKE & OLLIE WILL SORT IT! Potholes are still high on the agenda this month, especially after all the rain followed immediately by snow and ice. These are the perfect conditions for pothole creation as water sits in cracks in the road and then expands as it freezes. **With over 800 pothole jobs in south Somerset alone, the South Somerset Highways Office has really got its work cut out!**



"My thanks go to all the residents who have been busy reporting potholes online - it is an enormous help," says Oliver, "Unfortunately our IT system appears to be sending out 'inspected but not a defect' emails automatically. Please bear with us whilst we investigate. In the meantime if you think a pothole is taking too long to repair please email us and we'll chase it up."



Remember, you can report ANY issue (potholes, dog fouling, flytipping... and more) here:
www.fixmystreet.com

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oliver.patrick@somerset.gov.uk