

- 4.2 The long-eared species is most likely to be the brown long-eared, due to the facts that this species is widely recorded in Herefordshire, and that the grey long-eared (*Plecotus austriacus*) tends to be a more southern species. This can only be confirmed by handling an individual. Brown long-eared bats tend to roost in relatively small groups, a maternity roost usually containing ten to twenty individuals.
- 4.3 Brown-long eared bat emerge about half an hour after sunset, preferring to emerge when it is dark, rather than half-light like pipistrelles. This is why they 'exercise' and roost within the main body of the church first. This species is known for feeding on any available insects within the roost, such as the butterflies, and even spiders. They forage for insects, especially moths, within vegetation, their short, broad wings making them very manoeuvrable. For this reason they are not likely to spend much time within the churchyard. Their large ears and quiet calls makes them very good 'gleaners', picking insects from the vegetation before they have taken flight.
- 4.4 The porch does not appear to be used as a regular roosting site for pipistrelle bats, but it may be used as a night roost. This is where they rest during the middle of the night when insect activity is reduced, re-emerging several hours before dawn to forage before returning to their day roost.
- 4.5 To aid the cleaning of the church, areas that are utilised most often by the bats, such as the pulpit area, can be covered by a washable or wipe-able material. The wipe-able tablecloths available are very suitable. The droppings can then be gathered up and deposited in the graveyard. Bat guano is a very good fertiliser, as it contains a large proportion of undigested insect (droppings just crumble to the touch), due to the rapid digestion that bats must undertake. A common pipistrelle can eat three thousand midges in a single evening! Bat droppings do not pose a health risk.
- 4.6 British bat species have different roosting and foraging habitat requirements. The common pipistrelle only requires small crevices, such as those between a roof tile and the roof lining material. A brown long-eared bat prefers a more open roosting area, such as that found in a loft space or a church tower.
- 4.7 A way of enhancing the roosting opportunities for bats within the churchyard would be to erect bat boxes. These could be erected on trees, preferably in groups of three. There are various types of box, the simplest is a wooden construction very much like a bird box (see leaflet). Schwegler boxes are made from woodcrete and require less maintenance (available from Jacobi, Jayne & Co.).
- 4.8 The practice of leaving areas of grassland to grow long increases the insect diversity within the churchyard, which is beneficial to all creatures that eat insects. Areas such as these are extremely important, and if they can be incorporated into the management of the churchyard will greatly increase the wildlife diversity. A common pipistrelle's appetite requires good areas of foraging habitat within reach of its roost! The limitation of the use of insecticides within the churchyard would also assist the biodiversity and foraging potential. If any planting is to take place night scented plants could be included, again to enhance insect diversity (see leaflet).

## **5.0 Summary**

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- 5.1 Brown long-eared bats are utilising the church and tower for roosting. The churchyard and neighbouring trees are used as foraging habitat by several bat species.
- 5.2 There is potential to enhance the foraging and roosting potential of the church and churchyard. Sympathetic management within the churchyard, to increase insect biodiversity, will boost feeding potential. The erection of bat boxes within the churchyard will increase roosting potential.
- 5.3 If work takes place on the church tower care must be taken not to disturb the bats, or to block their access. A local bat worker can assist in such circumstances.