SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FORT FERGUS (BALLYNACALLY)

SITE CODE: 000035

This Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) roost is located in four small lofts in a block of farm buildings attached to Fort Fergus House, Ballynacally, Co. Clare. Small numbers of bats (<50) use the lofts during the summer but it is not known if the site is a nursery site or a roost of male and non-breeding females. This site has not been visited since the late eighties so the numbers using the lofts may have increased. The buildings were once domestic living quarters but are now in disrepair and are used for storing farm materials.

The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is a small delicate bat which is confined to six western counties, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork. Body measurements include forearm 35-42mm, head and body 35-39 mm, wingspan 235mm and weight 4-9g. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat population is estimated to be about 12,000 animals and could be the largest national population in Europe. This species is easily recognised by the presence of a nose-leaf around the nostrils and its habit of always hanging straight down. Nursery roosts can number several hundred animals and occur in large roof spaces of old houses and farm buildings where the bats can fly straight into the roost and hang from the roof or ceiling. This species does not occur in modern buildings. In winter, the Lesser Horseshoe Bat hibernates in underground sites where it hangs with its wings wrapped around the body. It forages close to woodland and at the edges of water.

The owners were well disposed towards the bats so only site deterioration would threaten the site. It is a site of national importance and one of the few known in this area of Munster.

4.11.2009