SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CASTLE HACKETT SOUTERRAIN

SITE CODE: 002038

This site consists of a man-made, stone, underground passageway which dates from between 500 and 1200 A.D. It is situated in a field close to Castle Hackett Estate, Caherlistrane, County Galway. It is a winter hibernation site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

In the past, souterrains were used for food storage or as places of refuge. Today they offer ideal hibernation conditions for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat as they are humid and remain at a constant temperature.

There is no vegetation cover surrounding the entrance to this souterrain, which is in a field grazed by sheep. There are, however, trees and hedgerows within 100m of the site.

Lesser Horseshoe Bats have been seen at this site each winter since 1985. The highest number recorded was 35 individuals. Public access has been a problem in the past and in 1995 a grille was fitted in the passageway running from the entrance - this should lead to an increase in the numbers of bats using the site.

As well as being a regular hibernation area, this site is notable as it is one of the few Lesser Horseshoe Bat sites in County Galway.

8.12.2009