SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DUNMORE CAVE

SITE CODE: 000401

Dunmore Cave is a tourist cave owned by the Office of Public Works which is used by at least 50 Natterer's Bats (*Myotis nattereri*) during the summer months. It is a fossil cave located in an isolated limestone outcrop on the Castlecomer plateau, over-looking the Dinin River Valley, approximately seven miles north of Kilkenny City. It is possible that more bats roosted in the cave before it was developed and opened to the public in the late 1960s. It is possible that this bat also hibernates in the cave during the winter. However, it is not easy to count Natterer's Bats in hibernation as they hide in small cracks and crevices.

The Natterer's Bat is an uncommon bat in Ireland, only several thousand are known from throughout the island. Body measurements include forearm 36-43mm, head and body 45mm, wingspan 270mm and weight 5-12g. It is distinguished from other species by the presence of a still fringe of hairs along the tail membrane, fairly long pink ears and bright white fur on its underside. Few nursery colonies are known and these are in a variety of buildings, including church and house roofs, stone barns and caves. Single bats or small numbers are found under bridges during the summer. During winter, a few Natterer's Bats have been found in underground sites. This species forages in woodland where it catches insects in the air, or off foliage or the ground.

As only a few thousand Natterer's Bats have been recorded throughout Ireland in the past ten years, this site is definitely of national importance and possibly of international importance.

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