

Big Belly bins call the council when they're full

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The last thing you want to see in the foreground of a glorious stretch of the Antrim Coast Road is an infestation of seagulls hovering over a bin overflowing with food remains, bags of dog faeces and empty drinks cans.

And it shouldn't happen again, according to Larne Borough Council, which has just launched Northern Ireland's first solar-powered waste compactor street bin — an all-singing, all-dancing, all-texting, space-age disposal unit that would have Oscar the Grouch aching with envy.

The bin is capable of holding six to eight times more rubbish than an ordinary municipal bin, thanks to the compactor which is powered by a solar panel that needs just six hours of daylight a month.

Once the bin is 85% full, it sends off a wireless signal, alerting council staff that it needs to be emptied.

Not only that, but in the next few weeks the bins will be installed with bluetooth technology — allowing tourism information to be delivered to the mobile phones of visitors using the bin — anything from bathing water quality to events or opening hours.

Nineteen bins have been installed throughout the Larne council area in some of Northern Ireland's most scenic spots. Binmen will no longer set off on fruitless expeditions to check empty bins in the most remote of the nine Glens.

Speaking at the launch at Carnfunnock Bay yesterday, Larne Borough Council director of environmental services Philip Thompson said: "The Antrim Coast Road attracts half a million visitors a year. We care for 36 miles of coastline but what we are finding is at peak time, when tourists come to the borough, the facilities can't keep up with them.

"It's a fairly significant problem. You find the bins are full even on Saturday morning."

The 'Big Belly' bins have attracted the interest of quite a few councils in Northern Ireland, who sent representatives along to the launch. They could be turning up at a beauty spot near you.

Read more: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/big-belly-bins-call-the-council-when-theysquare-full-14923900.html#ixzz18Htb6lPC>