

'Vile and unhygienic' solar-powered bins that cost £3.5million



Made in US: How they ought to look

Daily Mail Reporter

USING solar power to compact rubbish as it is deposited and wi-fi to contact councils when they are full, smart bins are springing up all over the country.

But angry residents have condemned them as 'vile' and unhygienic, and criticised local authorities for splashing out a total of more than £3.5million to install them.

First trialled in the UK six years ago, the BigBelly bins have solar panels on their lids, powering a compactor inside that crushes rubbish to an eighth of its size.

When they are ready for emptying, they send text and email alerts to councils - reducing the number of collections they have to do and saving money in the long term.

But residents say the bins are not emptied often enough and are frequently overflowing.

There have also been complaints about the mechanism used to open the bins, with many saying the handles are usually too dirty to touch so they end up putting rubbish on top rather than inside.

Dozens of photos have been



Overflowing: Waste including coffee cups is dumped on a stuffed BigBelly in Chester

posted on social media showing the bins filled to overflowing.

After a Freedom of Information request, councils across the country revealed they have spent a total of £2.6million buying the BigBelly bins and at least £1.1million leasing them.

The US-built bins cost up to £5,500 each to buy, depending on individual deals.

Nottingham council is the biggest spender, paying £627,000 to lease 170 bins over five years, while Croydon in south London bought 80 for around £440,000.

Other big-spending councils include Brighton and Hove,

which bought 105 bins for an estimated £577,500, Rugby, which bought 25 for £127,000, and York (28 for £126,000).

Cheshire West and Chester council, which has an annual leasing bill of £68,000 for the bins, has faced a savaging from angry residents.

One, Holly Sinclair, said: 'Having to touch the handle is vile and such an unnecessary thing when it could easily just be an opening.'

Sam Jones added: 'Most of the time I have to just leave my rubbish on the top of the bin to avoid touching the handle.'

Council official Maria Byrne said the bins had been in place since June 2015 and slashed the number of waste collections from 209,160 to 12,801 a year.

She added that the bins are inspected every day and cleaned regularly, both inside and out.

Nottingham City Council said bins are now emptied only once a day compared with six times with older models.

Councillor Sally Longford added: 'We don't have problems with over-filling. Touching the handles is no more of a hygiene issue than touching door handles or handling money.'

Kingfishers at risk as rivers face drought

KINGFISHERS and water voles are under threat amid warnings that a quarter of English rivers are at risk of drying up.

Water voles are the country's fastest-disappearing mammal, with numbers falling 90 per cent since the 1970s, while kingfishers are in moderate decline.

Now both are said to be in greater danger as a result of the lack of rainfall over the winter and recent months.

With parts of the UK feared to be facing a drought, the wildlife charity WWF says a quarter of rivers and more than half of chalk streams are in danger of drying out.

The problem is being made worse as a result of water being removed, or 'abstracted', from them to supply households and farmers.

RSPB spokesman Jamie Wyver said dried-out rivers reduce kingfishers' ability to find food and leave their nest burrows more vulnerable to predators.

When river flows are reduced, water voles are also more vulnerable to predators such as the American mink because they are unable to flee to their riverbank burrows via underwater entrances.

The Environment Agency said: 'We are in a prolonged period of dry weather. Our latest assessment (2016) shows 81 per cent of rivers, lakes and estuaries have water flows that support the ecology well.'

How holding hands cuts pain

HOLDING the hand of a loved one in troubled times is a natural reaction, but research shows it helps to lessen pain.

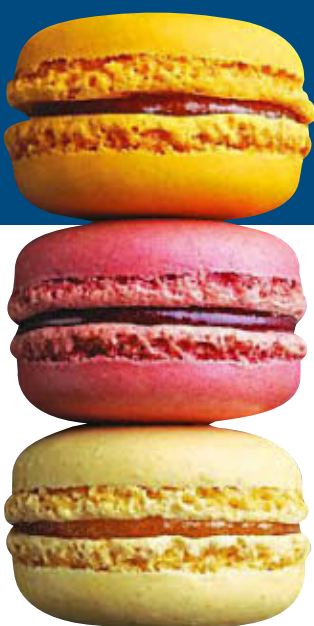
Scientists found that when a man held the hand of his female partner as she was being subjected to mild pain, their heart and respiratory rates synchronised and her discomfort was reduced.

Researchers at the University of Colorado Boulder tested 22 couples, aged 23 to 32, as part of the study into 'interpersonal synchronisation' where individuals physiologically mirror the people they are with.

The couples either sat together, not touching, sat together holding hands, or sat in separate rooms and repeated all three scenarios as the woman was subjected to a mild heat pain on her forearm for two minutes.

Study leader Dr Pavel Goldstein said: 'The more empathetic the partner, the stronger the analgesic effect and the higher the synchronisation between the two when they are touching.'

'It could be that touch is a tool for communicating empathy, resulting in an analgesic, or pain-killing, effect.'



Tuck in: Enjoy these delicious M&S summer macaroons

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