

Bag Bin Atypical Waste Receptacle – Brief Report on William Street South Trial of Product

Background

In 2020 Dublin City Council initiated a trial to explore solutions to address the challenge of the Storage and Presentation of Waste in Dublin City Council Administrative Area. The use of plastic bags for the storage and presentation of waste causes significant issues in respect of the creation of litter through the failure of bags through mishandling or interference from vermin.

After a competition, Owenbridge, the designers of the “Bagbin” were selected as the product designer and manufacturer for this trial. The “Bagbin” option represented a waste receptacle that provided protection to the plastic bag thus reducing the opportunity for littering. The product offered a more “industry standard” appearance, similar to the traditional wheelie bin for waste presentation.

A six month trial commenced in 2020 extending into 2021, and while this initial trial proved successful in part, a number of challenges were apparent, particularly around the storage of the product when not in use.

Current Trial

After further refinements in product design and operational changes to its use, Dublin Town, Owenbridge, along with the Waste Collectors, and with the support of Dublin City Council, agreed to commence a further trial/proof of concept, to determine the merits of this revised product design in a commercial street setting.

William Street South was chosen as the location of this trial and a trial process began in Q4 of 2023 to begin discussions with retailers. It is important to note, that following a letter from Dublin Town, all the merchants and retailers willingly adapted to use BagBins straight away as they appreciated the difference BagBins could make to the optics of their street.

The following steps explain the roll out of the Bagbin.

1. First, in September 2023, 47 merchants on William Street South were identified who were using bags instead of bins for presenting their waste and recyclable materials. Based on the number of bags presented on their heaviest day of the week, it was determined how many BagBins each Merchant should have.

2. After a few weeks of active participation a few merchants asked for the odd extra BagBin to cover their peak requirements. There are currently 81 BagBins in active service on the street, 37 x 170ltr and 44 x 270ltr
3. Three of the four waste collectors servicing bag collections in the Central Commercial District have bag customers on this street and include, Panda, Keygreen and CityBin (now part of Thorntons Recycling).
4. Every BagBin delivered is branded with the collector's logo. This means each collector is able to easily spot their own branded BagBins, so they no longer have to root through a pile of 20+ bags to find their branded or stickered bags.
5. Every BagBin has a unique serial number stamped on the inside of the bin at the top, as well as an RFID chip fitted under the lid hinge to allow collectors to record which BagBin was emptied and at what time. There is a small sticker on the outside of the back of each BagBin where the merchant's name is written in permanent marker so that both the collection crews and the merchants can identify each BagBin visually so they are replaced in the correct spot.
6. There have been a few BagBin casualties over the four months they are in operation. Tropical Popical (nail salon) lost their BagBin about a month into the mission, Therapie (spa) had their BagBin set on fire the night of the riots, and Lemon (cafe) had two of their three BagBins swiped by a homeless person, caught in the act on CCTV. Each of the BagBins were replaced the following day. In addition, during the trial, 3 retail units have started to use wheelie bins.

The first photo file attached herewith, and following this short report, and entitled WSS Bags Sept2023, is an array of all the plastic bags left out every evening on William Street South just before the BagBins were rolled out. This provides a view of the street prior to the roll out of Bagbin.

The second photo file attached represents Keygreen customers and was put together for Keygreen collection crews (waste and recyclables), who service 42 of the 47 merchants. It starts with a few pictures of the BagBin and how to close it, then a map showing all their collection points on the street. The photos also show where each BagBin should be left after emptying. The Designer Exchange shop just around the corner on Exchequer Street is included in this roll out also.

Next Steps

While initial results are encouraging of the Bagbin in use on William Street South, it is recognised that a larger sample size of retail and commercial premises is needed to fully understand how the product will perform for different mix of retail units and commercial buildings.

A significant challenge to the use of this product, is the storing of the Bagbin, or fixing of the Bagbin when not in use. The larger sample size of retail units will provide more challenges in this regard, in terms of contending with different facades, including heritage buildings and protected buildings, and the storage issues that may arise.

While we accept the Bagbin does not support all legislative changes, for example, supporting the principal of incentivised charging, it is agreed that it does improve the appearance of the streetscape during waste presentation times and reduces littering. Despite the fact that there are limitations with Bagbin to facilitate these legislative changes, unlike the use of the wheelie bin, we have agreed to support a further roll out of the product across the city.