



LINK Financial Inclusion Programme



Welcome

Having recently been appointed as the new LINK Consumer Council Chairman, I have been impressed with the focus the LINK Scheme has on the needs of consumers. This is particularly apparent in the achievements of the Financial Inclusion Programme over the last decade. The figures speak for themselves, with almost 90% of the original areas of deprivation identified being resolved by access to new free-to-use ATMs.

Cash is an important payment method for UK consumers and, in 2015, 48 million people used a cash machine, with 89% of users withdrawing money at least once a month. The LINK network processed over 2.8 billion transactions in 2015 and dispensed £194 billion in cash to UK consumers. Cash is particularly important for consumers in lower socio-economic groups as it allows them to budget more effectively.

While LINK has continued to make progress on the original areas of deprivation identified in 2006, it has, in response to customer research, launched a number of tools to enable consumers to access their cash more easily and made a number of enhancements to the Programme. The most recent inclusion of 927 new sites, as a result of independent research conducted by Toynbee Hall, demonstrates that LINK is continuously looking for improvements and adapting to the changing needs of consumers.

LINK is committed to the future of the Programme and will continue its work in the coming years.



**Tracey Graham,
Independent Chairman
of the Consumer Council**

“LINK has a very strong consumer focus and free access to cash features highly on that agenda. We have put in place a unique Financial Inclusion Programme that enables us to listen and take action where needed to improve consumers’ access to cash. Our progress has been demonstrable over the past decade and LINK and its Members remain committed to continuously working towards financial inclusion for UK consumers.”



John Howells, LINK Scheme CEO

“The Consumer Council has strongly supported the establishment and development of LINK’s Financial Inclusion Programme over the past decade because of the Programme’s important role in improving access to free-to-use ATMs for consumers in deprived areas.”



Lady Margaret Bloom, Independent Member of the LINK Consumer Council

“The Financial Inclusion Programme has had a very positive effect since it was introduced, as it has enabled a large number of free-to-use ATMs to be installed in areas where the costs would otherwise have been prohibitive.”



**Nigel Constable, NoteMachine,
LINK Member and ATM Operator,
Member of the LINK Consumer Council**

“LINK’s Programme has evolved from focusing on generalised needs to meeting the specific needs of communities and individuals. The original aim that everyone should have access within one kilometre to a free ATM was good; but I’m particularly impressed with LINK’s use of our research to identify where geography or personal circumstances meant the standard one kilometre wasn’t working for some communities. LINK has taken forward actions to resolve this.”



Sian Williams, Toynbee Hall, Member of the LINK Consumer Council

Our 10-year journey

Over the past decade, the establishment and development of the Financial Inclusion Programme has been critical to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable consumers in society.

2006



In 2006, the Treasury Select Committee launched an investigation into ATM provision in the UK, looking at the growth in pay-to-use ATMs and the impact of access to cash on financial inclusion. As a result of this work, LINK and its Members established the Financial Inclusion Programme, designed to improve access to cash for consumers in the most deprived areas of the UK. This work estimated that there were about 1,700 deprived areas in the UK that could benefit from a free-to-use ATM, and so a premium was agreed to support the provision of machines.

2007

520+

Number of the 1,700 identified deprived areas that had been resolved by the provision of a new free-to-use ATM.



2009

1,082

Number of the 1,700 identified deprived areas that had been resolved by the provision of a new free-to-use ATM. Over 720 new free-to-use ATMs were installed by LINK Members.



2011

1,329

Number of the 1,700 identified deprived areas that had been resolved by the provision of a new free-to-use ATM.



2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2013

LINK launched an online Suggest a Site function that invites members of the public to get in touch to nominate a location for a new ATM if they feel their cash machine is too far away.

+ link.co.uk/cardholders/suggest-a-site/



LINK launched an Online Mapping Tool that enables anyone to search any area in the UK and find out detailed information about the location of cash machines. It provides important information about each cash machine, such as whether or not they are free-to-use, areas of deprivation that have good ATM access and areas where there are access issues to resolve.

+ link.co.uk/financial-inclusion/financial-inclusion-mapping-tool/

2014

LINK enhanced its Suggest a Site functionality, allowing consumers to suggest sites for £5 note dispense – this is particularly important for consumers who need to access small balances on their accounts.

+ link.co.uk/cardholders/suggest-a-site/suggest-a-site-for-dispensing-5-notes/

Recognising that personal security is important to consumers when using ATMs, members of the public are now able to nominate sites where they feel security could be improved – for example, through better lighting.

+ link.co.uk/cardholders/suggest-a-site/suggest-a-site-for-improved-customer-security/

2.8 billion

Number of times throughout 2014 that consumers used ATMs – withdrawing more than £189 billion in cash.



2015

Revised Financial Inclusion Programme

In 2015, following a Westminster summit on ATMs, LINK engaged Toynbee Hall to carry out independent analysis of access to cash and financial inclusion. As a result, Toynbee Hall recommended that LINK enhance the Programme by using smaller geographical areas, as the life circumstances of those on lower income mean they are less likely to travel away from their homes, thereby providing more specific geographical focus on access to cash.

The research also led to an improved definition of deprived areas to include those where there is a higher proportion of individuals in receipt of government benefits.

This work identified 927 new areas that were brought into the Programme. By December 2015 – the end of the first year – LINK had resolved 277 of these 927 sites.

70,000

The record number of ATMs reached in September 2015 – 50,000 of which are free-to-use.



2012

2013

2014

2015

2016



1,503

Deprived areas identified in 2006 that have a free-to-use ATM.

324

Deprived areas identified in 2015 that have a free-to-use ATM.

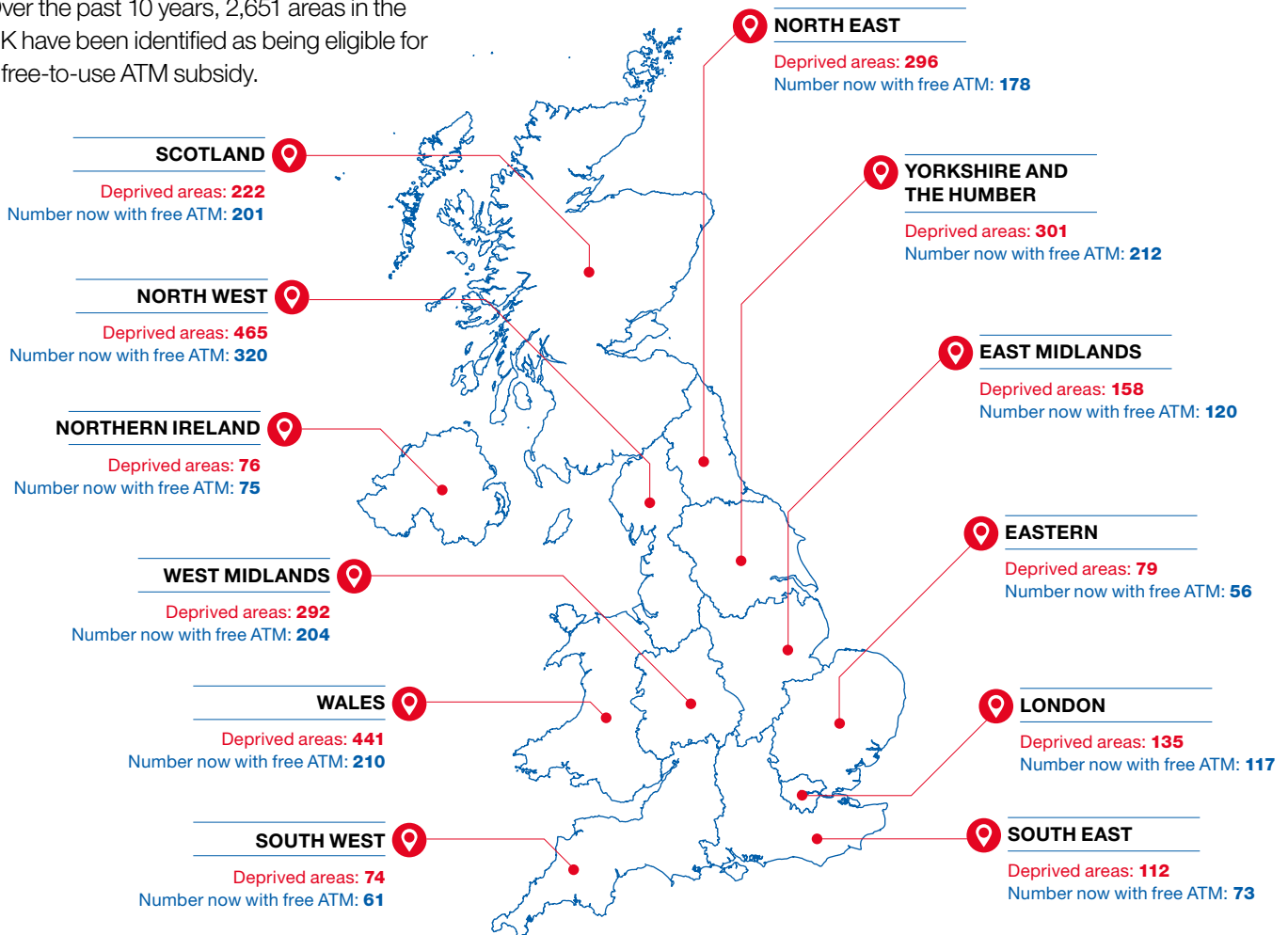
1,827

Total deprived areas with a free-to-use ATM.

All figures as of June 2016

Support to deprived communities

Over the past 10 years, 2,651 areas in the UK have been identified as being eligible for a free-to-use ATM subsidy.



New polymer £5 note

The next Bank of England £10 and £20 notes will be printed on polymer and the new polymer £5 note, featuring Sir Winston Churchill, was issued on 13 September 2016. Polymer banknotes are cleaner, safer, and stronger than paper banknotes. They provide enhanced counterfeit resilience and increase the quality of banknotes in circulation. LINK has been supporting the Bank of England and LINK Members' plans for this exciting development, chairing the ATM Working Group and as a member of the project's Steering Committee. Scottish banknote issuers have announced similar plans for their notes.

New Link Scheme Board

Over the past 18 months, LINK has conducted an Independent Governance Review, delivered by a panel of distinguished experts led by Lord David Hunt. As a result of this work, Link Scheme Ltd has established a new Board that comprises a majority of independent Directors recruited for their consumer credentials, alongside Member Directors, who represent the needs of their consumers.

www.linkschemeltd.co.uk

2016

If you are a consumer group or organisation that would like to know more about LINK or have any suggestions or feedback for the team, please get in touch.

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