



THE UK'S CASH MACHINE NETWORK

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# LINK MONTHLY REPORT

March 2021

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LINK recommends that people continue to take their usual hygiene precautions for contact with surfaces whether they are using ATMs, spending cash, or making payments by methods such as cards or phones. In particular, washing your hands regularly and refraining from touching the eyes, nose and mouth.

## 1. KEY ACTIVITIES

Lockdowns remain in place across the UK and the LINK ATM network continues to operate to its usual high standard and remains well positioned to support UK consumers' access to cash needs through effective risk management and operational resilience, both now and as the restrictions are relaxed and life begins to return to normal. LINK continues to work closely with its infrastructure provider and Network Members, all of whom have continued to apply a vigorous level of focus on ATM activity throughout the ongoing crisis.

The LINK Board held its regular monthly meeting by video link in early March. The Board reviewed LINK's continued effectiveness in meeting its consumer commitments. The Board was pleased to note that LINK's overall risk profile remained stable with a continued focus on controls and mitigations. The Board approved the updated Information Security Policies and LINK's responses to the PSR's Consultations on the *New Payments Architecture* and *Annual Consultation on Specific Direction 8*. The Head of HR gave her bi-annual report to the Board, noting that the overall HR position remains satisfactory, despite the challenging environment and the significant expansion of the team.

LINK staff continue to work effectively on a remote basis. Regular virtual updates are shared by the Senior Management Team and in February an interactive virtual business insight event was held bringing the whole team together. A number of new team members have been successfully on-boarded and there are programmes in place to help support staff. In line with the Government's advice, LINK has suspended field-based activity, but this will resume as soon as restrictions are eased. Thorough planning is also underway to ensure a safe return to the office when further lifting of restrictions permits this later in the year. There are currently no commercial or operational issues causing concern and LINK and its various service providers continue to perform to the expected very high standard.

## 2. LINK VOLUMES AND VALUES

LINK transaction volumes and values in February continued to be affected by the various lockdowns across the UK and the volume of LINK transactions was down 46%, and values 38%, when compared to February 2020. The difference between volume and value is because the average value has increased significantly to £84 this year from £67 in 2020. This increase in average value was also seen during the 2020 lockdowns.

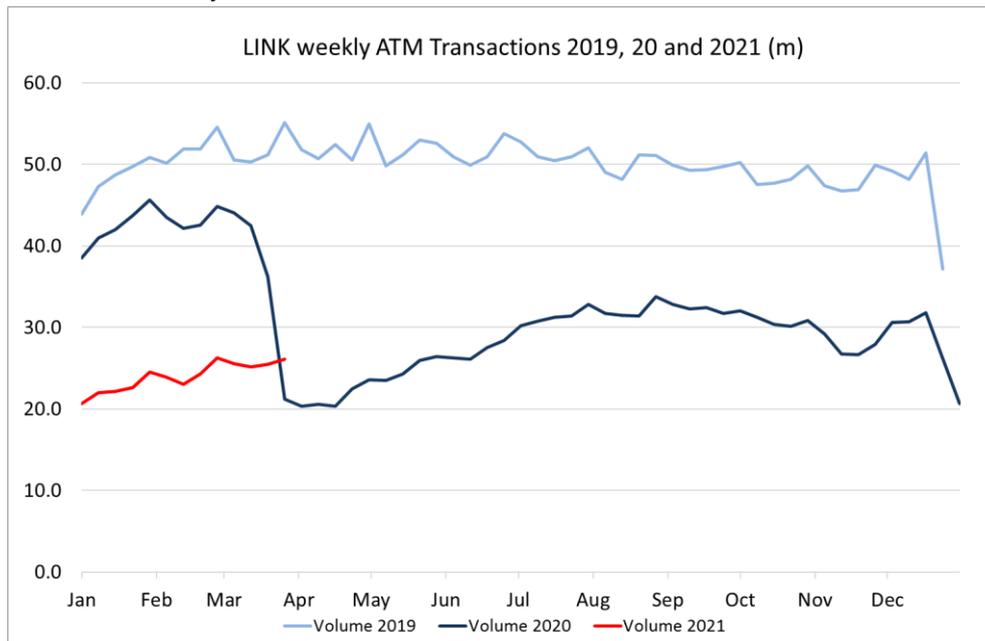
Both volume and value have seen little change in February from the previous month as the restrictions on retail and leisure spending continue. Nevertheless, despite restrictions limiting activity to essential requirements and travel, there were still almost 100 million LINK transactions and over £5 billion withdrawn.

LINK Transaction Volumes (millions)													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	209	207	232	220	232	221	226	225	211	214	208	204	2,608
2020	185	181	155	91	110	117	139	141	139	138	118	129	1,643
2021	99	97											196

LINK Transaction Values (£millions)													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	£8,788	£8,859	£10,211	£9,701	£10,354	£9,837	£10,070	£10,271	£9,336	£9,512	£9,494	£9,985	£116,417
2020	£8,182	£8,258	£7,450	£4,399	£5,664	£5,972	£7,076	£7,105	£6,903	£6,939	£6,016	£7,044	£81,010
2021	£5,062	£5,127											£10,189

The chart below shows how LINK weekly transactions volumes and values changed through from January 2019. After the large fall in the first lockdown in March /April 2020, ATM use increased through the early summer as various restrictions were relaxed. This reached a peak in August from a combination of people taking “staycations” in the UK and spending being boosted by the eat-out-to-help-out scheme. However, Autumn saw LINK ATM usage decline, roughly at the same rate as 2019, until the tightening of restrictions in October and especially November reduced ATM use quite significantly, although not as much as the first lockdown in March/April. This pattern of reduced ATM usage has continued into 2021.

Chart 1: LINK weekly transaction volumes



### 3. ATM NUMBERS

ATM coverage across the UK remains satisfactory. A large number of the ATMs that closed during to the April/May 2020 lockdown reopened, although some have remained shut due to social distancing requirements or the continued closure of the premises which house them.

The November lockdowns led to ATM numbers falling once again as host premises closed, although a few managed to reopened in December before restrictions were reintroduced. Lockdown has continued, resulting in some venues housing ATMs being temporarily closed, and the number of ATMs reflects this. There are around 53,000 operational LINK ATMs, the same number as in June 2020. Despite the restrictions, the overall operational performance of the network continues to be high.

LINK ATM Numbers by Type and Owner 2020												
2020	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Branch	15,588	15,605	15,583	15,391	15,351	15,309	15,311	15,292	15,198	15,098	15,044	14,987
Free Remote	29,638	29,336	28,478	25,392	25,393	25,652	26,240	26,875	27,050	27,077	26,598	26,740
<b>Total Free</b>	<b>45,226</b>	<b>44,941</b>	<b>44,061</b>	<b>40,783</b>	<b>40,744</b>	<b>40,961</b>	<b>41,551</b>	<b>42,167</b>	<b>42,248</b>	<b>42,175</b>	<b>41,642</b>	<b>41,727</b>
Pay to use	15,323	15,307	13,745	12,412	12,549	12,814	12,999	13,398	13,426	13,373	12,780	12,847
<b>Total ATMs</b>	<b>60,549</b>	<b>60,248</b>	<b>57,806</b>	<b>53,195</b>	<b>53,293</b>	<b>53,775</b>	<b>54,550</b>	<b>55,565</b>	<b>55,674</b>	<b>55,548</b>	<b>54,422</b>	<b>54,574</b>
Bank and Building Societies	25,148	25,001	24,955	23,268	23,236	23,294	23,309	23,295	23,130	22,971	22,897	22,856
Non Card Issuers	35,401	35,247	32,851	29,927	30,057	30,481	31,241	32,270	32,544	32,577	31,525	31,718
<b>Total ATMs</b>	<b>60,549</b>	<b>60,248</b>	<b>57,806</b>	<b>53,195</b>	<b>53,293</b>	<b>53,775</b>	<b>54,550</b>	<b>55,565</b>	<b>55,674</b>	<b>55,548</b>	<b>54,422</b>	<b>54,574</b>

LINK ATM Numbers by Type and Owner 2021												
2021	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Branch	14,917	14,827	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Free Remote	26,541	26,233	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Free</b>	<b>41,458</b>	<b>41,060</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pay to use	12,491	12,156	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total ATMs</b>	<b>53,949</b>	<b>53,216</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bank and Building Societies	22,801	22,660	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non Card Issuers	31,148	30,556	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total ATMs</b>	<b>53,949</b>	<b>53,216</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### 4. MAINTAINING ACCESS TO CASH

LINK's Financial Inclusion Programme continues to be effective in maintaining free access to cash for consumers in rural, remote and deprived communities across the UK. To-date, 58 lost free-to-use ATMs have been targeted for replacement and resolved, with 15 resolved through Direct Commissioning, 19 resolved through Premiums and the remaining 24 resolved by regular installation programmes. Overall, over 3,500 ATMs are in receipt of a subsidy as part of LINK's work on financial inclusion. LINK is now using

social media to further raise awareness of the initiative and continues to welcome requests for ATMs.

## 5. LINK FOOTPRINT REPORT

LINK is committed to maintaining free access to cash for many years to come through an extensive network of ATMs, the footprint of which covers the same area as it did on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018. This includes *Protected ATMs* which are 1km or more away from another free ATM and are therefore vital for their local communities' cash access. These Protected ATMs are analysed every month and the changes are summarised below. There are now 58 ATMs which have been replaced through this initiative.

January 2021	ATMs	Monthly change
Total Protected ATMs	3,122	11
Live ATMs	2,679	-15
<b>ATMs No Longer Transacting</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>26</b>
Temporarily out of action	86	20
Investigations with operator underway	25	2
<b>ATMs Confirmed as Closed</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>4</b>
ATMs not being replaced (a)	274	0
<b>ATMs Targeted for Replacement</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>4</b>
LINK Members offered premiums for replacement	1	0
LINK directly commissioning a replacement	30	4
<b>Resolution not Possible (b)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ATMs previously targeted for replacement and now resolved (c)</b>	<b>58</b>	

### Notes

(a) ATMs are not replaced where consumers have free access to cash over the counter from a nearby post office, where the site was not accessible to the public, where there are security concerns, or where there is assessed to be no community detriment following a site visit by LINK.

(b) Where it is not currently possible to replace a *Protected ATM* for reasons such as no suitable premises within 1km, no willing site owners to host an ATM or no operator willing to deploy an ATM. LINK may still consider alternative actions and these sites remain on file.

(c) Sites which were targeted for replacement through the programme and now have free access to cash via an ATM, whether through Premiums, Direct Commissioning or through the free competitive market.

## 6. PRESS RELEASES

17<sup>th</sup> March 2021: *One year on: how Covid-19 changed the UK's relationship with cash*  
<https://www.link.co.uk/about/news/one-year-on/>