



Link Scheme Holdings Ltd

LINK Scheme ATM Footprint Report

March 2021

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In LINK's Final Decision and Impact Assessment on the results of its Interchange Consultation, published on 31st January 2018 (<https://www.link.co.uk/about/news/link-moves-to-secure-future-of-free-atms/>), the Board of LINK set out its commitment to maintain free access to cash for many years to come through an extensive footprint of ATMs with the same coverage as now. The date of this commitment started from 1st February 2018.

This included a commitment to leave interchange unchanged for all existing free ATMs 1 kilometre or more away from another free ATM, to ensure that LINK's reduction in interchange would not give a reason for closure. These ATMs are known as Protected ATMs.

This also initially included a commitment to apply at LINK's discretion a premium of up to 30 pence to deal with specific problems with free coverage of ATMs caused by loss of a Protected ATM. On 1st April 2019, LINK introduced additional premiums that can significantly increase payments to ATM operators by up to £2.75 per cash withdrawal. Premiums will be made available to all eligible Protected machines; these measures are aimed at safeguarding free-to-use ATMs in remote and rural areas.

Should these premiums not deal with a particular situation, then LINK has the ability to directly commission ATMs to provide free access.

The Board has decided to publish the total number of Protected ATMs and the number where free access has been removed through closure or by being turned into charging ATMs. Reports will be provided on a regular basis.

This report sets out an analysis of the number of Protected ATMs no longer transacting and, after identifying where there is alternative access to cash provision (such as a Post Office counter providing free cash access), and where there is no public impact (for example, because the site was not accessible to the general public, e.g. it was within a closed company site), it shows the resultant number of sites that will be targeted for replacement with premiums. Note that where the loss is due to a security reason such as a raid, and there are no willing site owners, LINK will not plan a replacement until the security situation is judged safe again by local site retailers and ATM operators.

In addition to this, LINK also publishes on its website the number of free and charging ATMs by parliamentary constituency.

For questions about this report contact LINK at www.link.co.uk/contact-us/.



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	Current Position	Net Change Since Last Month	Explanation/Definition
Total Protected ATMs	3,133 (100%)	+2	Free-to-use ATMs that do not have another free-to-use ATM within 1 km. This figure is updated monthly to include additional ATMs that now meet Protected status.
Live ATMs	2,701 (86%)	+8	A live ATM is one that is connected to the LINK network and being used.
ATMs No Longer Transacting	432 (14%)	-6	An ATM that is not active (reason will need investigating to confirm if permanently closed, or if the closure is temporary due to operational issues such as an upgrade or machine change). 11 Protected ATMs were identified as no longer transacting or switched to pay-to-use. 17 Protected ATMs that were not transacting previously came back online, were replaced or removed from Protection resulting in a net change of -6.

ATMs No longer Transacting	432 (14%)	-6	As above.
Temporarily Out of Action	78	-5	Temporary issue with site, plan in place to re-install. Of these, there are 62 sites where LINK is aware that a temporary issue in place is due to COVID-19. This could be due to store closures or travel restrictions.
Investigations with Operator Underway	17	-5	Under investigation.
ATMs Confirmed as Closed	337 (11%)	+4	Free-to-use ATM permanently closed or switched to pay-to-use.

ATMs Confirmed as Closed	337 (11%)	+4	As above.
ATMs Not Being Replaced	282	+7	Locations where consumers have free access to cash over the counter from the Post Office (163), where the site was not accessible to the general public (75), e.g. inside a corporate building, where there is a security issue (17), or where there is



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			deemed to be no community detriment following a site visit by LINK (27).
ATMs Targeted for Replacement	55 (1.8%)	-3	Further action taken by LINK to replace – see detail below.

ATMs Offered Premiums for Replacement	-	-	Premiums offered to LINK Members.
ATMs Not Replaced after 2 months – Now within Direct Commissioning	29	-2	After offering premiums, LINK will look to replace ATMs through directly commissioning a LINK Member to deploy and run a free ATM. These ATMs are currently within the Direct Commissioning Process and over time will either be resolved through a replacement ATM or it will be determined that a replacement is not currently possible and reported below.
ATMs Targeted for Replacement – Resolution not possible.	26	-1	Where it is not currently possible to replace a closed 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 consider alternative actions that it deems appropriate for these locations with consideration to the objective of protecting free access to cash. One site which was previously confirmed as closed which LINK had judged to not result in any community detriment has returned to operation.

ATMs Targeted for Replacement Now Resolved	61	+2	Where a targeted for replacement site has now got free access to cash via an ATM or Post Office, whether through premiums, direct commissioning or through the free competitive market.
Resolved through Direct Commissioning	17	+1	Where a targeted for replacement site has now got free cash access through direct commissioning. A free-to-use ATM was installed in Houghton-le-Spring this month.
Resolved through the Free Market	25	+1	Where free cash access has been resolved by the free market. A free-to-use ATM was installed in Yateley this month by an ATM Operator.
Resolved through Premiums	10	-	No sites have been resolved through premiums this month.



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Offered to LINK Members ¹			
Resolved through Premiums Prior to Offer to LINK Membership	9	-	No sites have been resolved under this category this month.

Protected ATMs installed by Community Request Scheme²	2	-	Protected Machines which were never technically “Targeted for Replacement” but which have been replaced as a result of LINK’s Community Request initiative. Machines have been installed in Durness and Dishforth Airfield as a result of community requests locally.
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A list of the locations where ATMs are “Confirmed as Closed” is included with this Report.

Where an ATM is “Confirmed as Closed”, LINK assesses whether there is a Post Office counter service nearby as an alternative method for consumers to access their cash. If there is not a Post Office and the previous ATM was publicly accessible, then the area will be designated as “ATM Targeted for Replacement”. LINK does not own or operate ATMs and the siting of ATMs is a competitive market for ATM operators who choose to deploy where it makes sense for them to do so commercially. LINK therefore offers premiums to operators to support the deployment of a free-to-use ATM in locations designated as “ATMs Targeted for Replacement”. Where an operator commits to an installation, it can take a number of months for the ATM to be replaced. This period can vary depending on a number of factors e.g. the time it may take to find a suitable and willing retailer, negotiating commercial contracts, buildings works or potentially planning consents.

Appendix 2: Financial Inclusion Programme Update

See separate attachment.

Appendix 3: Interchange Strategy Changes

On 16th July 2018, LINK announced changes to future interchange rates, canceling the third 5% cut due in 2020 and putting on hold the fourth due in 2021.

On 20th September 2018, LINK announced increases to cash interchange rates effective from 1st October 2018 in response to changes in the Bank of England’s base rate. This had the effect of increasing cash interchange rates by approximately 2%.

On 1st January 2019, LINK reduced interchange rates by 5% in line with its interchange announcement at the end of January 2018.

¹ Machines are offered a Protected Premium and, if they qualify, a Low Volume Premium. More details available at <https://www.link.co.uk/initiatives/financial-inclusion/>

² These machines can be resolved via a range of interventions, either Direct Commissioning or premium offers. However, they are sites which were never targeted for replacement under the Footprint Reporting process.



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On 1st April 2019, LINK introduced additional premiums that can significantly increase payments to ATM operators by up to £2.75 per cash withdrawal. Premiums are available to all eligible Protected machines and ATMs which resolve access in the most deprived areas under the Financial Inclusion Programme. These measures are aimed at safeguarding free-to-use ATMs in remote and deprived areas.

On 23rd July 2019, LINK announced that interchange rates effective from 1st January 2020 would be unchanged from those in effect from 1st January 2019.

On 19th March 2020 LINK announced that following a decrease in the Bank of England bank base rate to 0.25%, after careful consideration, particularly in the light of current economic conditions, the LINK Board decided that LINK interchange would remain unchanged for the time being.

On 23rd March 2020 LINK announced that following a further decrease in the Bank of England bank base rate to 0.1%, after careful consideration, particularly in the light of current economic conditions, the LINK Board decided that LINK interchange would remain unchanged for the time being.

On 27th July 2020, LINK announced that interchange rates effective from 1st January 2021 would be unchanged from those in effect during 2020.